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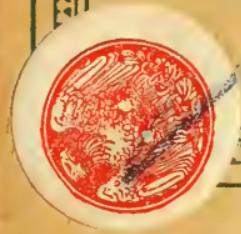
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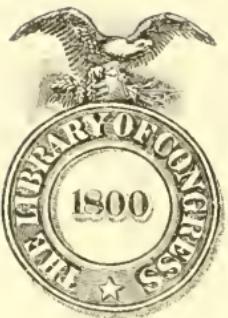
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ALONG THE MISSOURI

BY
HARRY VAN DEMARK



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Along the Missouri

A Western Rural Drama in Four Acts

BY

HARRY VAN DEMARK

Author of "THE RANCHMAN," etc.



PHILADELPHIA
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Along the Missouri

CAST OF CHARACTERS

WILLIAM WATSON	.	<i>Known to his friends as "kind old Bill."</i>
JOHN WATSON	.	<i>His son, a budding politician.</i>
NORWOOD CRANE	.	<i>Alias RANDOLPH RADEOURNE, a scheming financier.</i>
DUSTIN BARNES	.	<i>Buffeted by fortune.</i>
MANDERS MAFFITT	.	<i>A country banker with prejudiced political and social views.</i>
RIP STOKEY	.	<i>Bill's hired boy.</i>
KATHERINE PATTON	.	<i>The village school-teacher.</i>
VIRGINIA MAFFITT	.	<i>Manders' daughter.</i>
TILLIE WATSON	.	<i>Bill's old maid sister.</i>

TIME IN REPRESENTATION :—Three hours.

ARGUMENT

John Watson is a rising young lawyer and candidate for the legislature. He is engaged to Virginia Maffitt. Her father, who has political influence, is defied by John. Maffitt holds a mortgage on the Watson farm and threatens to foreclose unless Virginia gives John up, and she does so to save him and his family from unhappiness. Maffitt himself is in the power of Norwood Crane, alias Radbourne, a criminal adventurer, but John and Dustin Barnes, a reformed tramp, oppose and finally expose Crane and save Maffitt.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—Watson Farm. Rip, a funny hired boy. Barnes tells his story. Radbourne and John. “I don’t know what your game is, but I warn you to drop it, right now.”

ACT II.—Watson Farm. Radbourne and Maffitt offer to help John win the nomination—at a price. John scorns the offer. “You can’t bribe me.” Barnes defies Maffitt. “Might does make right!”

ACT III.—Watson Farm. The farm to be sold. Maffitt bargains with Virginia. “To save their home to the Watsons you must give John up.” “I will do as you ask.” Barnes comes back reformed and finds his wife, whom Radbourne had estranged. Barnes and Radbourne (or Crane). “Killing is too good for him.”

ACT IV.—The governor’s mansion in the capital. A ball going on. Radbourne forces Maffitt to give him Virginia. Barnes to the rescue. Radbourne is beaten, Maffitt repentant and Virginia is restored to John.

COSTUMES

“BILL” WATSON. Acts I, II, and III, farmer’s working clothes, high boots, flannel or cotton shirt, etc. Act IV, black “best” suit, heavy boots or shoes, black necktie. Smooth face or gray beard.

JOHN WATSON. Acts I, II, III, neat business suit. Act IV, evening dress. Smooth face.

RADBOURNE (or CRANE). Acts I, II, and III, well dressed in business suit. Act IV, evening dress. Dark moustache and has mark on right wrist.

DUSTIN BARNES. Acts I and II, ragged suit, old broken shoes and hat, etc. (Tramp costume, but not too eccentric.) Act III, business suit, not fashionable but good. Act IV, evening dress. Unshaven appearance in Acts I and II. Smooth face Acts III and IV.

MANDERS MAFFITT. Acts I, II, III, dark business suit, or frock coat. Act IV, evening dress, or frock coat. Gray hair, eye-glasses.

RIP STOKEY. Eccentric farmer boy make up and costumes in Acts I, II, and III. During Act I changes to a suit too small for him. In Act IV has on “store clothes,” red necktie, and very shiny shoes, cuffs too large for him, etc. Very much “dressed up.”

KATHERINE PATTON. Acts I, II, and III, plain black or dark dress, or dresses. Hat in Act I. Act IV, elaborate and handsome evening gown.

VIRGINIA. Fashionably dressed throughout. Act I, riding suit and hat, gloves, whip. Acts II and III, walking suit and hat. Act IV, handsome evening gown.

AUNT TILLIE. Gray hair and glasses. Wears plain dress, apron and cap in Acts I, II, III. Black dress, lace collar, "mitts," gold chain in Act IV.

PROPERTIES

ACT I. Wood crash for RIP. Water to wet RIP. Stick and knife for BILL. Bottle, pie, sandwich, card, for BARNES. Riding-whip for VIRGINIA. Cigar for JOHN.

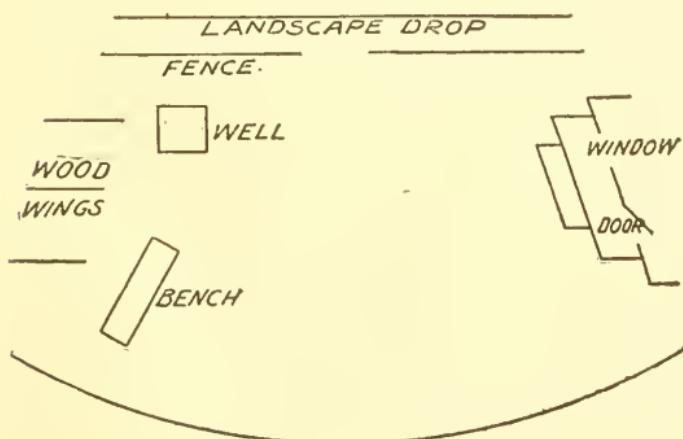
ACT II. Soap, towel, etc., for BILL. Tray of food, dishes, etc., for KATE. Letter for BARNES. Musket for BILL.

ACT III. Flag, musket, letter, for KATE. Newspaper for BILL. Check-book, check and card for MAFFITT. Revolver for BARNES.

ACT IV. Bandanna handkerchief for BILL. Check-book, fountain pen and slip of paper (receipt) for BARNES.

SCENE PLOTS

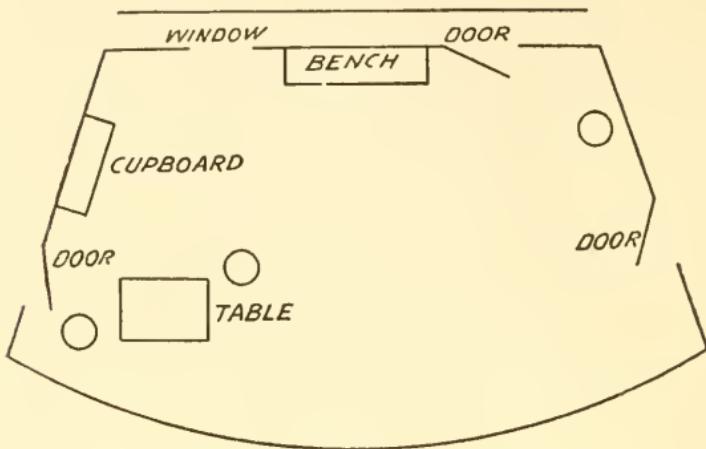
ACTS I AND III



SCENE.—The old Watson Farm near Watsonville, Missouri, and landscape drop representing foothills, wood wings r. Set house down L., with practical board and window. Fence, with gate, across back. Rustic seats by fence and

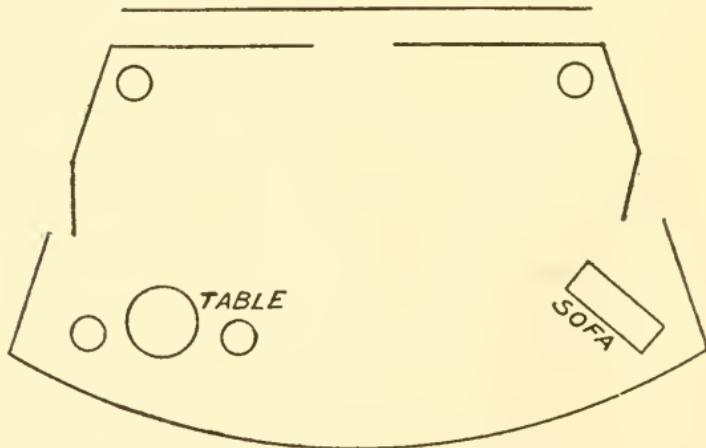
down R. Well, with practical wheel or windlass, bucket and rope up R.

ACT II



SCENE.—Kitchen of the Watson house. Box set, with exterior backing. Cupboard up R. and old-fashioned musket lying near or hanging over it. Door L. c., window R. c., wash-bench between, with basin, soap and towel, etc. Table and chairs down R., doors R. and L., rocking-chair down R.

ACT IV



SCENE.—Executive mansion, Jefferson City. Handsome interior, large door c. with portières, doors L. and R., table and chairs down R., sofa down L., interior backing. Other furnishings to suit fancy.

Along the Missouri

ACT I

SCENE.—BILL WATSON *discovered down R., on bench, whittling. He is whistling at rise, but stops after a moment and calls.*

BILL. Rip! (*Pause—no answer.*) Oh, Rip Stokey!

RIP STOKEY (*off L.*). Well, what d'ye want?

BILL. You'd better water that old brindle cow. She ain't had nothin' to wet her whistle fer so long she won't know how it tastes.

RIP (*still off*). Gol durn it! Jest when I was tryin' to git a wink o' sleep, too. I wish that cow 'd never been borned.

BILL. Well, you do what I tell ye to, an' be tarnation quick about it, or I'll tan yer jacket so ye won't know a brindle cow from a mushroom.

RIP. Well, I'm goin'—ding, dong, dang it! But I feel like takin' th' durn cow by the tail an' swingin' her into th' crick. Cows is allus stickin' their noses into somebody's bizness.

BILL (*chuckling*). Well, if you kin swing her into the crick, I'll stand the loss. (*Wood crash heard suddenly off L.*) Jimmineezer! what's he doin'?

RIP (*still off*). Git over there, you big four-legged biped, you, afore I smash you one on th' nose. When they made you they ought to left your whistle out, an' then we wouldn't have to wet it. (*Wood crash heard again.*) Oh, you old she-devil, lemme git at you! (*Commotion continues. BILL finally starts toward L. U. E., but meets RIP coming in, doubled up like a jack-knife, hands pressed across stomach, a look of pain on his face.*) Yer durn old cow's kicked a hole in th' barn an' got out—ding her, dang her!

BILL (*chuckling*). I guess that ain't all she kicked, neither I RIP. I don't git no sympathy, no matter what happens.

BILL. Well, ye ain't hurt, be ye?

RIP. Lemme kick you in the stomach like that cow did me an' see if you've got breath enuff left to ask.

BILL. Well, it's yer own fault. Ye allus knew she was a tricky customer.

RIP. Bet I'll kill her if it takes a year!

BILL. Yes, an' you'll come up about fifty dollars short on pay day.

RIP. What's th' difference? I don't git it nohow!

BILL. Now you're fibbin', Rip Stokey. Didn't I give ye ten dollars last Christmas to buy a suit o' clothes, an' a pair o' striped socks—an' yet ye dare accuse me o' holdin' back yer wages. (*Crosses to L.*) Git out o' here now, an' don't lemme see ye agin till chore time.

RIP. If that cow's about th' barn there ain't a-goin' to be no chore time.

BILL. Well, git about yer business, 'fore I tan yer jacket.

RIP. All right—I'm goin'.

BILL. An' see 'at yer about when I want ye.

(RIP *shuffles up R.*, but when he hears AUNT TILLIE WATSON'S voice as she enters from the house, he stops and leans against the well curb. AUNT T. has a copy of the "Watsonville News," her finger pointing at a glaring headline.)

AUNT T. (*going to BILL, who has resumed his seat under the tree*). There! Didn't I tell ye them Jenkins kids 'd git into trouble?

BILL (*whittling*). Well, what they done now?

AUNT T. Got into Gabe Johnson's apple orchard an' tried to carry it off. Gabe got th' constable, an' th' boys is in jail, where they'd oughter been a year ago.

BILL. Humph! I feel downright sorry fer 'em.

AUNT T. Do you mean to say, Bill Watson, 'at you'd uphold them youngsters in such lawlessness?

BILL. Well, I ain't sayin' what I'd do. But I ain't fergot 'at I wuz a boy onct myself. I used to swipe apples by th' dozens, an' sneak off frum school an' eat 'em, an' then go swimmin' down by th' dam, an' never turn up at home till the chores wuz did. (*Chuckles.*)

AUNT T. Well, I'd be ashamed to tell it. When I was

young my ma used to set me on a stool in th' corner when I was bad, an' if that didn't bring th' desired result, I had an interview in th' wood-shed with pa.

BILL. Yes, an' you cried so hard 'at your face got all screwed up in a knot. It ain't never got unscrewed.

RIP (*laughing loudly*). He—he—ha—ha ! That's a good one !

(*Starts cutting up, swings up on the well curb, loses his hold and falls in. Splash heard, mingled with yells and splutters.*)

AUNT T. (*rushing to well*). Land o' Goshen, if that boy ain't gone an' drowned hisself !

BILL (*following her*). Good riddance to bad rubbish, say I.

(*Together they peer into the well, BILL one side, AUNT T. the other.*)

AUNT T. Rip—oh, Rip Stokey !

RIP (*in well*). R-r-r-rruh—blub-blub-blub—o-o-o-o-o—!

AUNT T. What'd he say, Bill ?

BILL. Don't ask me—I ain't no linguist. (BILL *lowers bucket.*) Catch hold o' that, ye durn fool, an' we'll see if we kin git ye out o' there. (*They finally pull the bucket up with RIP clinging to it, and help him over the well curb, where he stands, soaking wet, blubbing.*) Well, you're a nice-lookin' pill !

RIP. I a-a-ain't no p-p-p-pill ! Ding, dong, dang it—jest my confounded luck !

AUNT T. (*pushing him*). Well, you git into th' house an' git on some dry clothes.

RIP. Boo-hoo ! Boo-hoo ! Boo-hoo !

(*Exits blubbing into house, AUNT T. following and pushing him occasionally. BILL looks after them and chuckles. Turns in time to see VIRGINIA MAFFITT, who enters R. through gate, a riding-whip in her hand. She is wearing a large American beauty rose.*)

VIRGINIA. Good-morning, Mr. Watson !

BILL. Hello, Virginny—how be ye? (Grasps her hand.)

VIRGINIA. Feeling fine, thank you. The air is so invigorating.

BILL (*looking around*). But where's yer hoss?

VIRGINIA. Oh, I left him out there, hitched to a tree.

BILL (*chuckling*). Rip took a bath in th' well, jest now!

VIRGINIA. Oh, did he? (*Delighted*.)

BILL. Yep—first time he's been near water in a week.

VIRGINIA. Then it should do him good. Where are Aunt Tillie and Kate?

BILL. Tillie's in th' house, but Kate ain't come up from school yet. (*Shades eyes with hand and gazes off R.*)

Partly near time she was here, though. (*Deep whistle off stage.*) Yep—there's th' noon whistle at th' factory. She'll be along pretty quick now. Sit down on th' bench where it's cool, an' I'll tell Tillie ye're here.

(*She sits and he exits into house. As he goes RANDOLPH RABOURNE enters L. and through gate.*)

VIRGINIA. I wonder where John is. I dare not ask his father, for he will think me too—too—well—
(*Sees RAD.—starts.*) Oh—oh—Mr. Radbourne! I—I thought for a moment that you were some one else.

RAD. So I observe, Miss Maffitt, and from the blush which mantles your cheek, I should say some one near and dear to you.

VIRGINIA. Why, I—I— (*Interrupted.*)

RAD. Oh, never mind! I did not mean to be inquisitive. I envy him his good luck, that's all. Do you call often at the Watsons'?

VIRGINIA. Oh, I run over occasionally when my horse is restless and I feel that a good spin will do him good.

RAD. (*smiling*). In at least one direction our tastes run in the same channel. We both love fine horse-flesh.

VIRGINIA. I wonder that you are not riding. We have plenty of horses in the stable. You are welcome to your choice at any time, except my Maribell.

RAD. I'm sure I thank you, but as I am on my way to the village to meet your father, I preferred walking. Won't you go with me?

VIRGINIA. Thank you, but I am waiting for Miss Patton.

RAD. (*with a slight start*). Patton?

VIRGINIA. Yes, the village school-teacher. I had forgotten you did not know her. She boards with Mr. Watson and his sister.

RAD. (*down R.*). Patton! Humph—it can't be! (*This*

is said half aside.) Very well, Miss Maffitt. Good-morning!

VIRGINIA. Good-morning, Mr. Radbourne. (*He bows and exits through gate and R. U. E.* VIRGINIA starts toward the house, but meets JOHN WATSON, who enters L. U. E., above house.) Oh—er—ahem! Is—is that you, John?

(*Turns from him, timidly hitting her skirt with her riding-whip.*)

JOHN. Who does it look like?

VIRGINIA. Well, it looks something like a man! (*Laughs.*)

JOHN. I thought I heard voices a moment ago. Who were you talking to? (*Looks off R.*) Oh, I see! Ah, ha! Who is he?

VIRGINIA. Why—why, that is Mr. Radbourne. He is staying over at our house.

JOHN (*looking at her keenly*). A friend of yours?

VIRGINIA. Well—er—not exactly; say, rather, a friend of papa's from London.

JOHN. London?

VIRGINIA. Yes—that is, he was formerly of London. He is now interested in Wall Street, and is financing a new road they are building to the copper mines.

JOHN. Then you are not interested in him, personally?

VIRGINIA. No, but I think he is interested in me. (*Laughs.*)

JOHN (*smiling also*). Well, I can't say that I blame him; and you look especially sweet and pretty this morning.

VIRGINIA (*archly*). Do I, John?

JOHN. Your cheeks are like roses—far prettier than that American beauty on your dress.

VIRGINIA. Oh, do you like American beauties, John?

JOHN. I love one.

VIRGINIA. Oh, do you? Then I'll see that you have a bunch on your desk to-morrow.

JOHN. One American beauty is enough for me

VIRGINIA. On—on your desk, John?

JOHN. Yes, if she will condescend to sit there.

VIRGINIA. Oh, John,—I—I— (*Interrupted.*)

JOHN. The American beauty that I have reference to has entwined itself about my heart.

VIRGINIA. How very, very uncomfortable that must be!

(*Laughs.*)

JOHN. Come, Virginia—be serious. You well know my sentiments toward you. I have told them over and over again. (*Takes her hand, she turning away and hanging her head.*) Virginia, do you love me?

VIRGINIA. Why, John, I—I—

(*As she hesitates BILL comes out of the house. VIRGINIA sees him, gives vent to a startled "Oh!" JOHN turns and sees him, laughs guiltily. VIRGINIA, laughing, runs off back of house, L. U. E., JOHN following. When BILL sees what he has blundered into, he makes a hurried exit into house, and after a moment sticks his head out of the window, peeping slyly around to see if they have gone. Enters from house.*)

BILL (*as he goes up and peeks around the corner of the house*). I'll bet that brindle cow agin a nickel with a hole in it that John's popped th' question. He's been figurin' on it fer some time, but ain't had the courage. (*Laughs, then grows suddenly sober.*) He allus thought he warn't good enuff fer her. Good enuff? Why, I'd like to see th' gal what's good enuff fer my boy John. He's good enuff fer—fer—well, he's good enuff, anyhow. I kinder wish he'd come back. I want to know if she said yes. Makes me feel kittenish to think of it. (*He does a dance step or two, and RIP, who enters hurriedly from house, catches one leg while it is in the air. RIP has changed his wet clothes for a suit of "store" clothes, much too small.*) Durn your skin, Rip Stokey, leggo—leggo, I say!

RIP. Yes, it's leggo—leg's goin' all right. (*In surprise, dropping BILL's leg.*) Well, durn me, is that you, Mr. Watson?

BILL. Ain't ye got eyes in your head?

RIP. Gee! I thought it was th' old brindle cow, an' I knew if I could git her with her leg in th' air, I'd sort o' have her at a disadvantage.

BILL. Well, durn my pictur'—no, durn yours! Took me fer a cow, did ye? I'll make mince pie out o' you!

(*Starts for him, but RIP laughs and runs out R. As BILL turns back down C., he runs on again.*)

RIP. Say, Mr. Watson.

BILL (*starting*). I thought I told ye to — (Interrupted.)

RIP. Ye did, but I forgot to tell ye that th' black heifer's fell down an' skinned her eye teeth !

BILL. What? Hey? Fell down an'—say, look here, durn you, that black heifer ain't got no eye teeth !

RIP. Guess I must 'a' made a mistake.

(*Shuffles out R., whistling.*)

BILL (*looking after him*). Some day I'll run a pitchfork through his in'nards.

(*Enter DUSTIN BARNES, R., and through gate.*)

BARNES (*upon seeing BILL*). Ahem !

BILL. Hello! you're a nice-lookin' chicken. Who be you, anyway?

BARNES. Sh! Let me whisper it! I'm a nature faker!

BILL (*chuckling*). Or a tramp—which?

BARNES. They're both alike—neither loves work.

BILL. I should say not. What ye doin' around here, anyway?

BARNES. Sh! Another secret! Maybe you think I'm looking for a chance to invest my money, but I'm not. But, just between you and me and the man in the moon, I'd like to dally a few minutes with some grub.

BILL. Well, I guess ye kin git that, all right, but first tell me who you be.

BARNES (*posing*). I am the lily of the valley. I toil not, neither do I spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of me.

BILL. Well, I should say not.

BARNES. Pardon me, sir. Your use of the English language is what we call unpardonable. You should say "nit."

BILL. Well, what'd ye like to eat, hey?

BARNES. Hay? Not on your life! But I might take some patty de foy graw.

BILL. Never heered of it.

BARNES. It is composed of cheese and rusty nails, with a little mustard mixed.

BILL. I ain't got none of it on my program, but how'd some cold meat an' pumpkin pie strike you?

BARNES. Like a stick of wood hits a kitchen stove—grate!

BILL (*half aside*). Ain't he a queer son of a gun? Just you wait here.

BARNES. I'd never run away with pie in sight. (BILL *laughs and exits into house*.) Now, I like that old man—there seems to be a lot of good nature in his composition. I believe if he'd offer me the chance, I'd go to work. But here—I'm getting serious again. (*Takes bottle from pocket*.) Now, there's the friend that makes you forget even your worst enemy.

(*Hears BILL returning and puts bottle in pocket. BILL enters from house with tray of food*.)

BILL. Well, here's that pie, an' I've thrown in a ham sandwich fer good luck.

BARNES (*taking pie and sandwich off plate*). Thanks, old man, thanks! Now, I'll just go down to the bank —

BILL. The bank? What bank?

BARNES. The river bank, and draw — (Interrupted.)

BILL. What ye goin' to draw?

BARNES. My breath!

BILL. Ye don't look as if ye'd drawn much else for some time.

BARNES (*seriously*). Well, to tell the truth, I haven't. I've had a downright case of hard luck.

BILL. I don't doubt it. What made ye a tramp, anyway? Every man has to have a beginnin'. I'm interested. (*Sits on steps*.)

BARNES (*seriously, laying food on bench and turning toward BILL*). What made me a tramp? What has made thousands of other good men tramps?

BILL. Don't know.

BARNES. Misfortune—misfortune and dissipation.

BILL. Well, you look as though you'd had your share of both of 'em.

BARNES. Hold on, old man, don't judge me till you've heard my story. A woman, pard — (Interrupted.)

BILL. Now, you hold on yourself—ye ain't goin' to blame all this on a woman, be ye?

BARNES. No—I'm not blaming any one but myself and the man who came between us.

BILL. That's right. A woman, ye know, is pretty much

what we make her. We often make her bad, but we seldom make her good. But go on with your story.

BARNES. Six years ago I was full of fire and ambition. I fell in love with one of the prettiest creatures God's sun ever shone upon. I worshiped her.

BILL. Did ye marry her?

BARNES. Yes, and settled down in the East. For a time everything went well, but when property declined in value, and I failed in business she grew discontented with her lot.

BILL. Was her folks good, moral people?

BARNES. Yes. They lived in New Orleans. One day she came to me and said she wanted to visit them, so I scraped together what money I could and sent her to New Orleans. For a time I received the most loving letters, but one day there came a note—only a little piece of scented paper, but the memory of it will never be erased from my mind—telling me she had ceased to love me and was never coming back.

BILL. That was a durn shame.

BARNES. Don't sympathize with me, old man; I had a friend in those days who sympathized with my troubles, and showed me how to forget them. I did and I forgot self-respect, business, everything. One day I woke up, and I hadn't a cent. Everything that had ever bound me to respectable society had vanished.

BILL. And your friend—what became of him?

BARNES. He, also, went to New Orleans. When I found that out I followed, riding, walking, as best I could, for I was dead broke. Once there, I learned the bitter truth—wife and friend had gone to Chicago together. I found some of the letters that passed between them, so I have ample proof of her guilt. Well, I went West, but the cards I held grew worse and worse, until I was almost ready to give up this battle of life. But one day something rekindled in my breast a spark of the old fire, and I became possessed of a desire to go East again. I started two weary months ago, and here I am!

BILL. An' ye never got any trace of your wife an' friend?

BARNES. No, but I will some day, and when I do—well, I'll kill him—throttle him as I would a yellow cur—and her—and her — (Interrupted.)

BILL. Now, hold on—not her ! You wouldn't hurt her, would you ?

BARNES. Yes, I would ; I'd—I'd —— (*Interrupted.*)

BILL. No, ye wouldn't ; not after ye'd thought it over. Maybe she thought she had reasons fer doin' as she did. Have ye ever thought of that ?

BARNES. No. What excuse could a woman have for a thing like that ?

BILL. Don't ye know there's such a thing as th' mind of a woman bein' pizened by a villain against those she loves ?

BARNES. Even then I would not forgive her.

BILL. Well, neither would ye harm a hair of her head. Remember that, an' remember another thing —— (*BILL rises and going to BARNES lays a hand on his arm.*) Remember your mother was a woman !

BARNES. Well—I know. I'll try and bear those things in mind if—if I ever meet her. (*Shakes BILL's hand.*)

BILL. When you're down to th' village, call on my son, John Watson. He's runnin' fer th' state legislatur'. He may be able to help you. He's got right smart influence 'round these parts.

BARNES. Thanks, Mr. Watson—I'll take your advice.

BILL. An' throw away that bottle I see stickin' out of your pocket—it's durn bad to quench thirst with. An' say, you haven't told me your name.

BARNES. Ah, yes, I'd forgotten. I ought to have a card about me somewhere. (*Searches.*) Yes, here it is.

(*Gives it.*)

BILL (*taking it*). I never thought you'd be guilty o' carryin' a card. (*Reads.*) "Dustin Barnes, New York." Dustin Barnes, eh ?

BARNES. Yes, Dustin Barnes, at present a dealer in real estate. (*Takes a bird's-eye view of himself and winks.*) Well, I'm much obliged for the food, old man. See you later !

(*Takes pie from bench and exits L. through gate.*)

BILL (*looking after him*). Well, he's about th' queerest fish I ever saw, but I reckon, as he says, he's seen better days. (*KATHERINE PATTON enters from R. through gate.*) Hello ! School out, Kate ?

KATE (*wearily*). Yes, Uncle Bill.

BILL. Why, what's th' matter, gal—ye look all worn out?

KATE. It has been a trying morning, Uncle Bill—I'll sit here on the bench a few minutes; I will soon be all right. (*They both sit on bench under tree.*)

BILL. I know what's th' matter—you've been whippin' too many o' them Dobbins kids.

KATE. No—no—it's not that.

BILL. Then what's ailin' ye, Kate? Come—an honest confession 's good fer th' soul, they say. There's been somethin' on your mind ever since you've been boardin' here. Out with it—p'r'aps yer Uncle Bill kin help ye.

KATE. No—no—I—that is, it is nothing. Just a little shadow of the past that is ever flitting before my vision. I—I've tried so hard to dispel it, but in vain.

BILL. Tell me what it is, Kate—there's allus a remedy fer worry.

KATE. Yes, I know, but—but it would do no good to tell you this. It is something that could not interest you in any way.

BILL. How d'ye know that?

KATE. Some time perhaps I'll unburden my soul to you, but not now, Uncle Bill—not now!

BILL. As ye will, Kate; but remember this—we all gits a taste o' th' bitter side o' life, no matter what we do, or where we are. So cheer up; whatever it is, it'll come out all right in th' end.

KATE. Your words give me hope an' cheer. But how is it, Uncle Bill, that you seem to understand trouble so well—a happy, prosperous farmer like you?

BILL. I fergot, Kate, ye didn't know th' old farm was mortgaged to Manders Maffit, Virginny's father. An' th' worst of it is, it'll soon be due, an' I don't know how I'm goin' to pay it, Kate, particularly as I've got to help John git his nomination.

AUNT T. (*in house*). Be that you, Kate? Kin ye help me with dinner?

KATE (*rising*). I'll be right in, Aunt Tillie.

AUNT T. (*appearing in door, sleeves rolled up, hands covered with flour*). Virginny Maffitt was here lookin' fer you a while ago, Kate—that is, she said she were lookin' fer you —— (*Winks significantly.*)

KATE (*smiling*). But in reality she was looking for John.

Oh, I know these little tricks of our sex, Aunt Tillie.

AUNT T. Like as not—like as not. I wonder if John ain't popped th' question?

BILL. Well, I reckon if he ain't he's a-goin' to.

KATE. Virginia will make him a good wife. I admire her very much.

(Enter RIP, R.)

RIP. Say, Mr. Watson —

BILL (*rising in a threatening attitude*). Now, you git out o' here!

RIP. Guess I must 'a' made a mistake!

(Exits, shuffling, R.)

BILL. That durn boy's th' plague o' my life.

AUNT T. I reckon he won't never git no sense.

KATE. Oh, Rip's all right. He hasn't had the advantages most boys have. He'll be a smart man some day.

AUNT T. Well, p'raps he will, but th' prospect are mighty dubious lookin' to me.

(Exits into house, KATE following.)

BILL (*still on bench*). It kinder gits next to me to see Kate lookin' so pale an' thin, jest as if she didn't have no more interest in life. Got to do somethin' to pull her out o' that, an' durn quick, too.

(Enter JOHN, L. U. E.)

JOHN (*joyously*). Father!

BILL. Hello, boy! Where's Virginny?

JOHN. She went in the back way to tell Kate and Aunt Tillie all about it.

BILL (*hopping around in great glee*). Ye don't mean—ye don't mean that she—she— (Interrupted.)

JOHN. That's what I do mean.

BILL. I'm sure tickled! (*Grows suddenly serious.*) But—but what about her father, John?

JOHN. Hang her father! I haven't taken him into consideration.

BILL. But ye'll have to—don't fergit that. He has high ambitions for Virginny.

JOHN. Yes; he'd sacrifice her happiness if need be for social position, but I'll fool him this time!

BILL (*proudly*). My boy, John! But say, John, don't fergit another thing—old Maffitt's got a mortgage on the farm, an' if ye displease him there's no tellin' what he's goin' to do.

JOHN. I am prepared for him. I haven't forgotten what he said to me when he first learned that I aspired for Virginia's hand.

BILL. Ye never told me, John.

JOHN. He said I had better get a reputation and money enough to support her.

BILL. Durn his skin! An' what did ye tell him?

JOHN. That I would like to have his consent, but that if I couldn't get it, I'd manage to get along somehow.

BILL (*chuckling*). My boy, John! But be careful, John be careful.

JOHN. I don't believe he'd dare make us trouble.

BILL. I'm not so sure about that. Manders Maffitt ain't no paragon o' virtue.

JOHN. I know, father, but you trust this business to me. Once I am elected, I will pay off this mortgage, and never again will the old place bow its head in shame.

(*Exits into house.*)

BILL (*as he goes*). I hope so, John—I hope so. (*Sits on bench again.* VIRGINIA *peeps slyly around the corner of the house, l., and seeing that he is alone, enters and tiptoeing up behind him, puts her hands quickly over his eyes.*) Gosh all hemlock—who's that? (*Starts to get up, then sinks down again.*) It's Virginny, I'll bet a nickel!

VIRGINIA (*releasing him*). How did you guess?

BILL (*taking both her hands and pulling her down on the bench beside him*). Because I thought it was about time ye was tellin' me about it.

VIRGINIA (*bashfully*). Why—why, about what, Mr. Watson?

BILL. Oh, come now, that ain't fair. Especially as John has jest been here.

VIRGINIA. Oh, did he tell you? I thought I might surprise you.

BILL. Virginny, you've made us all happy by promisin' to

be John's wife. John's goin' to be a great man some day.

VIRGINIA. I am sure of that. I shall try so hard to make him a good wife. Did you bring my horse up, Mr. Watson? (*Rises and looks off R.*)

BILL. Gosh, no—I clean fergot it.

VIRGINIA. Never mind, then. I'll walk down there in a moment. Here come papa and Mr. Radbourne.

BILL. Radbourne? Radbourne? Lemme see—where have I heered that name?

VIRGINIA. Oh, it's been in the papers a great deal lately. Mr. Radbourne is interested in some mining schemes at present, I believe.

BILL. Oh, yes. Ain't he th' man that's talkin' about buildin' a road through Watsonville to th' mines?

VIRGINIA. Yes, he's the man. I believe papa also is interested in it, though I don't know very much about his business affairs.

BILL (*half aside*). H'm! They ain't comin' up here fer no good whatever.

VIRGINIA. Beg pardon!

BILL. Oh, I was jest mumblin' to myself, Virginny.

(VIRGINIA seats herself on the steps just as MANDERS MAFFITT and RAD. enter from R., through gate.)

MAFFITT. What are you doing here, Virginia?

VIRGINIA. I came over to see Kate.

RAD. (*lifting hat*). Ah, still here, I see, Miss Maffitt?

VIRGINIA. Yes.

MAFFITT. How do you do, Mr. Watson? Allow me to introduce Mr. Radbourne of Jefferson City, formerly of Wall Street.

BILL. Pleased to meet you, Mr. Radbourne.

(*They shake hands. All three stand down R.*)

RAD. (*casting his eye about*). A pretty place you have here, Mr. Watson.

(JOHN enters from house and talks to VIRGINIA on porch.)

BILL. Well, I calk'late it ain't so bad to look at.

(MAFFITT and RAD. exchange significant glances.)

MAFFITT. Er—Mr. Watson, we—er—we have called to

see if we cannot interest you in the new railroad to the mines.

BILL. They're goin' to build it, then?

MAFFITT. Yes, it is an assured fact, thanks to Mr. Radbourne.

BILL. H'm, I reckon it'll pass pretty close to my farm, won't it?

MAFFITT. There's the rub. That's what we want to see you about. It will have to pass through it. Otherwise it will cost our corporation large and unnecessary expenditures of money.

BILL. An' what do ye want me to do?

MAFFITT. Why, er—er— (Interrupted.)

RAD. We thought perhaps, Mr. Watson, you would like to take some stock in the road. It is sure to be an excellent investment from the start; we have had good luck in securing a second-hand equipment of rolling stock for a very reasonable price.

BILL. I don't like th' idee of its goin' through my farm. The old place has been my home for nigh onto twenty years, an' I'm kinder sot agin puttin' a railroad on it. Them steam cars make too much noise.

(Enter JOHN, from house. He and VIRGINIA are strolling slowly toward R., when RAD. observes them.)

RAD. Going, Miss Maffitt? Won't you allow me to see you to your horse?

VIRGINIA. Oh, thank you very much, Mr. Radbourne, but I have asked Mr. Watson.

(JOHN and VIRGINIA exeunt R., laughing and talking.)

RAD. (angrily). I do not like your daughter's action, Mr. Maffitt.

MAFFITT. She meant no disrespect, Mr. Radbourne. I will speak to her later. (To BILL.) I trust you will reconsider your decision not to allow the road to run through your place, Mr. Watson.

BILL. Well, I ought to have some time to think it over.

(JOHN enters R., comes down and stands listening with one foot on bench under the tree, and directly behind the trio.)

RAD. That is impossible, Mr. Watson, for the reason that

we are all ready to go ahead with the road the minute we receive your answer.

BILL. I don't think I want anything to do with it.

MAFFITT. Then I regret that I have bad news for you.

BILL. An' what's that?

MAFFITT. Your mortgage, which falls due one month from to-day, cannot be extended.

BILL. But you said you thought it could.

MAFFITT. I know, but at that time we had a large surplus in the treasury; but since I have undertaken to finance a portion of Mr. Radbourne's railroad, I shall need every cent I can lay my hands on.

JOHN (*coming down L.*). My father has never defaulted in his interest, Mr. Maffitt. Surely he has the right to expect a few months' time. We are willing to raise the rate of interest a little.

MAFFITT. Ah, now, we are always glad to hear from our young political aspirant on any subject, even though we are forced to disagree with him. Ah—pardon me, this is my friend, Mr. Radbourne.

RAD. (*extending hand*). How are you, sir?

JOHN (*ignoring hand*). Mr. Radbourne and I have met before!

RAD. (*embarrassed; pause*). Ah, why yes, I'd forgotten. But—er—let us finish the business in hand.

JOHN. My father has already answered your question, sir. We want to be reasonable, but we do not want a railroad running through our farm.

MAFFITT. Then I fear there is but one alternative.

BILL. And that is —

MAFFITT. Unless you pay off your mortgage of \$4,000 by the first of next month, I shall be forced to foreclose, and dispose of the farm to the highest bidder.

JOHN. Don't you think that is unfair, Mr. Maffitt? There are other means of gaining your ends than through coercion.

MAFFITT. It appears not.

JOHN. Father, if you will take Mr. Maffitt into the house and give him a drink of cider, I will talk this matter over with Mr. Radbourne.

BILL. Certainly, John; but don't let them run the road through th' old farm, boy.

JOHN. Never fear. There is a way around that.

BILL. Come, Mr. Maffitt.

(MAFFITT *hesitates, then follows BILL. Exeunt into house.*
JOHN coolly lights a cigar.)

RAD. What is it you wish to say to me?

JOHN. I want to say first that this railroad will never be run through the Watson farm unless you buy it outright at a price to be stipulated by my father.

RAD. And I say it shall, if I have to enlist all Wall Street in my behalf.

JOHN. That's very clever, if it is intended for a joke.

RAD. What do you mean?

JOHN. That you have no more to do with Wall Street financially than I. I don't know just what your game is, aside from trying to defraud my father, but I'm going to warn you to drop this railroad business right now, or there will be a committee of one to settle matters, and he'll do it in a pretty thorough manner, too.

RAD. You dare threaten me?

JOHN. Yes, I dare that and more. Let me tell you a little story.

RAD. I don't want to hear it.

JOHN. You'll have to hear it! A few months ago a swindler pulled off a big deal in St. Louis and escaped with a large sum of money. He was afterward identified as a fake broker, who made his living by preying on the innocent. He has never been arrested, though the police have searched high and low for him. The only clue they have is a tattoo mark on the stranger's right wrist representing an American eagle.

RAD. (*haughtily*). What has all this to do with me?

JOHN (*coming nearer*). Not much, maybe. I haven't all the proof I need yet. But the man I'm after has a tattoo mark—an American eagle on his right wrist—

(JOHN suddenly grasps RAD.'s right arm and pushes up sleeve.)

RAD. What do you mean by that?

(Covers wrist hastily with left hand.)

JOHN. Too late! (Points to RAD.'s arm.) You know well enough what I mean—Mr. Norwood Crane!

ACT II

SCENE.—*Kitchen of the Watson house. Boxed set, with exterior backing. Cupboard up R. with old-fashioned musket lying near or hanging over it. Door L. C. Window R. C. Wash-bench between, with basin, soap, towel, etc. Table and chairs down R. Doors R. and L. Rocker down R.*

(KATE discovered at table, crying softly. BILL washing at bench. Quartet heard in distance singing "Home, Sweet Home.")

BILL (waving hand out of window). Fine, boys—good-night. Come over agin some o' these times. (Turns, comes slowly down, sees KATE.) Why, what's th' matter, Kate? You're cryin'.

(Lays hand on her shoulder.)

KATE (looking up). I—I was thinking of home, Uncle Bill. Perhaps it was the song.

BILL. Kate, there's a heap o' sentiment in that old song. Home is sweet, ain't it?

KATE. Yes, Uncle Bill—for those who have one.

BILL. Now, looky here! What you talkin' about, anyway? You've got money in bank, and as long as I've got a roof over my head, it's as much yours as it is mine, and you know it.

KATE. I do know it, and—and—thank you so much. (Looks around.) John hasn't come yet, Uncle Bill?

BILL. Nope—he ain't come up from the office yet.

KATE. He's late all the time now. I wonder what de-tains him?

BILL. Polytics, gal—polytics.

KATE. John is a man with an ambition and he does not mind work.

BILL. I should say not. Ah, Kate, but I'm proud o' that boy. Six an' twenty year ago when John's mother died, I felt I couldn't live till th' next Christmas. She were a good woman, Kate—a good woman. I re-

member when she called me to her bedside, an' placin' a thin, wasted arm about my neck, says: "Bill, I'm goin' on a long journey, an' soon our little boy'll be left without a mother. Watch over him, Bill, for my sake, an' bring him up like a good boy should be brought up." Then I saw th' light fade from her eyes. Th' harvest was over fer me, an' the winter had come.

(Business of being affected and trying not to show it.)

KATE. It was very sad, Uncle Bill.

BILL. John were a wee baby, then, with curly golden hair an' eyes as blue as th' skies. It almost broke my heart to hear him callin' fer his mammy. An' I couldn't tell him where she'd gone, because he warn't old enuff to understand. Kate, that boy is th' last memory I've got of th' old love. That's why I'm so proud of him. Why, I'm as proud of that boy as an old duck is of her ducklin's.

KATE. Why, everybody's proud of him, or else he'd never have received his nomination. He is sure to be elected.

BILL. Well, yes, if we kin raise th' assessment money.

KATE. Assessment money?

BILL. You see th' nomination ain't clinched yet. Afore he kin git it he's got to raise some money fer—fer th' polyticians. That's what they call assessment money. John's is a thousand dollars.

(Looks slyly at her out of the corner of his eye, to see if she suspects anything.)

KATE. Why, they don't buy votes, do they, Uncle Bill?

BILL. Er—no—I reckon not—it's fer halls, an' bands, an' barbycues, an' sich things as that. But I reckon we'll git it somehow—in fact, I'm sort o' in hopes we'll git it to-night.

KATE. From whom?

BILL *(looking around cautiously)*. Ye won't tell John, will ye?

KATE. Why no—certainly not, if you don't want me to.

BILL. Well, I think I've arranged to git it frum Manders Maffitt. I'm expectin' him over some time this evenin'.

KATE. Do you think John would approve of that, Uncle Bill?

BILL. Well, now, I dunno—I didn't ask him. What's more, I ain't a-goin' to.

KATE. Well, you know what's right, Uncle Bill.

BILL. Yes, I s'pose I do, Kate. I must 'tend to th' critters afore Manders gits here. He may bring that friend o' his with him.

KATE. Friend? What friend?

BILL. Randolph Radbourne.

KATE. I do not know him.

BILL. Well, ye ain't missed much. P'r'aps he ain't such a bad sort fer all that. He's kinder sweet on Virginny Maffitt, though. Guess he's expectin' to marry her, maybe. But John'll fool him there, all right. Don't wake Tillie, Kate; she's asleep on th' parlor sof. She's a reg'lar spitfire when she comes out of a sound sleep.

KATE. I'll not wake her.

BILL (*up to door, l. c.*). Guess that Rip Stokey must 'a' gone to sleep with his boots on som'eres. (*Rip's whistle is heard off R.*) No, by cracky, there he is now!

RIP (*sticking head in open window*). Say, Mister Watson!

BILL. So ye've come out o' yer shell, have ye? Where you been?

RIP (*grinning*). Swimmin' in th' creek.

BILL. What, in workin' hours? Don't ye know them chores ain't done yet?

RIP. Well, I'm goin' to do 'em, all right. I jest wanted to tell you about that bay mule — (Interrupted.)

BILL. We ain't got no bay mule, darn you! (*Picks up a bootjack and flings it at him.*) Now, git out of here.

RIP (*dodges, and bootjack flies over his head through the window*). Haw—haw—haw!

(*Dodges up and down, ad lib., as Bill makes threatening motions at him. Finally laughs, whistles, and disappears to R.*)

BILL. Kate, I could kill that durn boy without hurtin' my conscience a little bit.

(KATE laughs. BILL exits, l. c., mumbling to himself.)

KATE. Between Rip and Aunt Tillie, Uncle Bill has rather

an aggravating time. (*Enter AUNT T., from r.*) Oh, so you've woke up? (*Lays sewing aside.*)

AUNT T. Well, who wouldn't 'a' woke up with all that noise?

KATE. That was only Uncle Bill and Rip.

AUNT T. I could have guessed as much. You'd better stop sewin' o' nights, Kate. You'll ruin your eyesight.

KATE. I've laid it aside.

AUNT T. Where's Bill?

KATE. He went out to the barn.

AUNT T. (*at window*). My, what a bee-uty-ful night. That south breeze is enuff to make you rise right up an' snort. I've a good notion to go over to Jenkinses an' set a spell.

KATE. Why don't you?

AUNT T. I will if you won't be lonesome.

KATE. I'll be all right. John will soon be up from the office.

AUNT T. You know them Jenkins kids went an' got arrested fer stealin' apples. They say their trial comes up to-morrow. I'm goin' to find out about it. There's plenty o' cold vittles in th' cupboard fer John. I'm goin' out th' front way.

(*Exit L.*)

KATE (*picking up her sewing, starting to work, then laying it aside*). No; I promised Aunt Tillie I wouldn't. What a good old soul she is. She's been almost a mother to me. (*Knock at L. C. D.*) I wonder if that's Mr. Manders? Come in. (*Enter RAD. quickly.*) My God! You?

RAD. (*laying hat and cane on table*). Yes, I just learned a few moments ago that the Miss Patton I once knew was teaching school in Watsonville.

KATE. What do you want with me, Norwood Crane?

RAD. Sh! don't mention that name here. I am known in Watsonville as Randolph Radbourne.

KATE. What do you want?

RAD. I'll come to that presently. Meanwhile —

(*Interrupted.*)

KATE. Don't try to evade the issue. Mr. Watson may return at any moment and find me here with you.

RAD. I don't care.

KATE. No; but I do.

RAD. (*laughing*). Still the same old Kate—a trifle paler, but just as beautiful.

KATE. Cease your compliments, and don't forget I am a woman now—not a foolish, trusting girl.

RAD. I forget nothing.

KATE. Tell me what you want?

RAD. Your silence, of course—what else?

KATE. Oh, you were afraid I would discover your whereabouts and tell Mr. Manders who and what you are?

RAD. I admit it.

KATE. And you've changed your name? I suppose Norwood Crane wasn't high-sounding enough to meet Virginia Maffitt's ear.

RAD. Oh, that hussy? When I get a slice of her coin, I'm going to drop her.

KATE. You're going to drop her from this moment, or I will expose you.

RAD. You won't dare.

KATE. Try me. I'm a desperate woman. I was living here in peace and comfort until you intruded.

RAD. Then it's to be war?

KATE. Yes, war to the knife!

RAD. (*up to her*). Let me tell you something. If you ever breathe a word of my past to any one, I'll hound you out of here and ruin you.

KATE. It is only what I expected of you.

RAD. Come, be reasonable. If you tell Mr. Manders our affairs, they will soon be noised about the community, and you will be the one to suffer—not I. Who would be the first to point the finger of scorn at you, once your secret was known? Why, Virginia Maffitt, and Bill Watson's own sister. Do you think you could remain longer in this house? No—no; they would sneer at you and avoid you. Why, they would act as though your very touch contaminated them.

KATE. Oh, to think I must still be in the power of a man like you!

RAD. Will you be silent?

KATE. I suppose I have no alternative. But you must let me alone. The very sight of you drives me almost to desperation.

RAD. I will promise not to bother you as long as you keep your word with me.

(Enter BILL, L. C. D.)

BILL. Why, good-evenin', Mr. Radbourne.

(KATE drops in chair down R. RAD. turns and extends hand to BILL, who takes it.)

RAD. How are you? I called on a matter of business.

BILL. I see you've become acquainted with Miss Patton.

RAD. Why, yes, I have just discovered that we went to school together. Er—we have been having a rather interesting discussion on—er—well, I might say on morals.

BILL. Well, I guess whatever Kate says is about right, Mr. Radbourne. She's got a fine eddycation.

KATE. I—I am not feeling well, Uncle Bill. I'll ask you to excuse me.

(RAD., smiling, bows.)

BILL. You've been sewin' too much o' nights, Kate. You'll be all right in th' mornin'. Good-night.

KATE. Good-night. If you need anything, call me.

BILL. All right, Kate—all right. (She exits slowly, L.)

RAD. Do you know, after considering the matter, I have decided to take your mortgage off Mr. Maffitt's hands.

BILL. You have? Well, how's that goin' to benefit me?

(Suspiciously.)

RAD. It will benefit you in this way. As matters stand at present, Mr. Maffitt feels that he will have to foreclose to meet some necessary obligations, unless the mortgage is taken up before its expiration. Now, I will buy the mortgage from him, and without increasing the rate of interest, will extend it five years.

BILL. H'm. That'll be mighty nice.

RAD. Well, I feel that it's a pretty generous offer, Mr. Watson. But I have taken a liking to you, and when I like a man, there is no limit to my generosity.

(Enter JOHN, L. C. D.)

BILL. Ah, John—I'm glad you've come.

JOHN (*to RAD.*). Good-evening, sir.

RAD. Good-evening, Mr. Watson.

BILL. Mr. Radbourne wants to buy our mortgage, John, and without raisin' th' interest at all, extend it for five years.

JOHN. And what does he ask in return for this favor?

BILL. He ain't asked nothing yet.

RAD. (*rising, faces them*). No; I have asked nothing, as yet, in return for this favor, nor is it my intention to do so, except in a very small way. (*JOHN and his father exchange significant glances.*) You, Mr. Watson (*turning to JOHN*), can render me a great service with little exertion on your part.

JOHN. What is it you wish me to do?

RAD. You are a young man and a sensible one. You have gone into politics with an earnestness and fervor which will land you on top eventually.

JOHN. I hope so.

RAD. At the next session of the legislature I understand war will be waged on the railroad and mining companies of this state.

JOHN. So I understand.

RAD. I want your pledge, Mr. Watson, that you will do everything possible to defeat any measure which I do not consider beneficial to these interests.

JOHN. But suppose in doing so, I should go against my convictions?

RAD. That is your lookout.

JOHN. You can't be serious.

RAD. I am serious—decidedly so. This will be a very easy matter for you to manage, and I shall be getting —er—shall we say value received for extending the mortgage?

JOHN. Mr. Radbourne, you have come to the wrong man. The people of this vicinity want somebody to fight the corporations which are trampling them underfoot. They are electing me to do that very thing. The name of Watson has never been sullied by a stain of dishonor, and as long as I live, please God, it never shall be!

BILL (*chuckling*). My boy, John!

RAD. This sentiment is very pretty, sir, but it won't buy your election.

JOHN. You hound!

(Starts for him, but BILL gets between them.)

BILL. John, boy, wait! (*To RAD.*) When you come over here, Mr. Radbourne, I supposed you come as an honorable man; but I see I was mistaken, an' if you can't act more like a gentleman than you've been a-doin', you'd better get your hat an' go before I turn John loose.

RAD. You may as well be cool about this. I am only speaking the plain truth, and if it hurts I can't help it. I have tried to do you both a service. You have seen fit to reject my proposals, so I have only one thing to say. I control every newspaper of any consequence in this precinct, and you know the power of the press.

JOHN. You cur! (*Starts. BILL gets between again.*)

BILL. Not yet, John—not yet. Let's have peace as long as we kin. (*To RAD.*) You mean if he don't accept this infamous proposal, you'll use your power to defeat him at th' poils, eh?

RAD. That's just about the size of it.

BILL. Well, we don't want none of it in ours.

RAD. Then we are losing time. You'll be sorry for this. Such deals are made every day by politicians.

JOHN. There are many dishonest men in politics, but you'll find that I am not one of them.

BILL. My boy ain't no Judas.

RAD. Judas Iscariot was a politician of olden times, yet he sold himself for gold.

BILL (*releasing JOHN*). At him, boy—he's overstepped th' mark! (*JOHN springs forward and, grasping RAD. by the throat, forces him back over table.*) Don't strangle him too hard, John.

JOHN. He and his kind have been strangling us for years!

(*He pulls RAD. to his feet, whirls him around toward the centre of the room, releases him, at the same time striking out straight from the shoulder. RAD. falls. JOHN stands panting, hands clenched.*)

BILL. I guess you've done fer him.

JOHN. I didn't mean to hit him so hard.

(*RAD. groans, and staggers slowly to his feet.*)

RAD. I—I'll remember this, John Watson.

BILL. Yes, I guess you will.

JOHN (*pointing to door, L. C.*). Go, before I forget myself again! You will know what to expect if you ever set foot on this place again, Norwood Crane.

(JOHN exits quickly, L.)

RAD. You seem to have the upper hand to night, but let me tell you that in the long run money is mightier than muscle.

BILL (*getting RAD.'s hat and cane off table and thrusting them in his hands*). John showed you th' way to th' door, Mr. Radbourne, or Crane, or whatever your name is. I guess you'd better take his advice.

RAD. (*at door*). You have not heard the last of this. Good-night.

(*Exits, L. C. D.*)

BILL (*looking after him*). Good-night, ye durn muskrat.

(*Comes slowly down to table and sinks into chair, apparently lost in thought.*)

(*Enter RIP and AUNT T., L. C. D.*)

AUNT T. Land o' Goshen! Looks to me like there's a storm brewin'. I run every step o' th' way frum Jenkinses, so's I wouldn't git wet. It come up awful sudden like. A little while ago there wasn't a cloud in th' sky.

(*RIP washes at bench.*)

RIP. Say, Mister Watson.

BILL. Well, what d'you want?

RIP. You know th' old brindle cow?

BILL (*rising threateningly*). Now, looky here—don't you go no further. I've had enuff o' your foolishness.

RIP. But — (*Interrupted.*)

BILL. You shut up or you'll lose your job.

RIP. All right—guess I must 'a' made a mistake.

BILL. If there ever was nary time when ye didn't make one, I ain't been around.

(*RIP, drying his face on a towel, grins.*)

AUNT T. Where's Kate?

BILL. She went to her room a while ago—said she wasn't feelin' exactly right, but told me to call her if I needed anything.

AUNT T. I suppose she's in bed by now.

BILL. No, I guess not—more likely a-studyin'. There jest ain't no let up to her work. I never seen such a gal before, Tillie.

AUNT T. Well, I'm sleepy, so I guess I'll go to bed. Where's John?

BILL. He come in an' went out agin.

AUNT T. On more business, I s'pose?

BILL. Yes, bad business.

AUNT T. Well, good-night.

BILL. Ain't you goin' to wait fer th' Maffitts?

AUNT T. Be they comin' over here?

BILL. Sure they be. At least, they said so.

AUNT T. No, I won't wait. I don't fancy 'em, nohow. Good-night!

BILL. Good-night!

(*She exits, L. U. E.*)

RIP. Say, Mister Watson.

BILL (*glaring at him*). What'd I tell you? Hand me that old musket off'n th' cupboard.

RIP. Sure. (*Gets it.*) Say, Mister Watson.

BILL (*pointing musket at him*). Now, you git out o' here!

RIP. You bet! Guess I must 'a' made a mistake.

(*Comic exit, L. C. D.*)

BILL. That durn boy gits foolisher every day. Don't know what I'm goin' t' do with him. (*Sits again.*)

(*Enter JOHN, L.*)

JOHN. Has he gone?

BILL. Yes, an' I reckon we're goners, too.

JOHN. Don't talk that way. We'll find some way to circumvent this scheming scoundrel. You don't blame me for what I did?

BILL. Blame you? (*Pats him on the back.*) No, boy—I'm proud on you fer it. Th' only thing I fear is th' influence that rascal will use with Manders Maffitt.

JOHN. We'll find a way around that, too.

BILL (*shaking head dubiously*). I dunno, John, whether we kin or not.

JOHN. Do you remember the story you used to tell me when I was a boy? It was called "Have Courage." I think that would apply in your case now.

BILL. Yes, I remember it, John, an' your old dad'll take a brace on himself. I didn't mean what I said. We'll find a way around everything. (*Holds musket out.*) There's th' old musket, boy, that was carried by your mammy's granddaddy at Lexington an' Bunker Hill, an' if our liberties are become a thing of th' past, your dad kin shoulder it yet, fer th' spirit o' '76 runs in his blood, too.

(*Turns back to door, gun pointing over his shoulder.*)

JOHN. That's the spirit we need to-day, father, with the financial interests allied against us.

(*At this moment BARNES enters, L. C. D., sees gun pointing in his direction, makes comic exit, looks in window.*)

BARNES. Don't shoot, old man—don't shoot!

BILL (*turning, sees him, laughs*). Hello, is it you? Don't be afraid. I never shot at a scarecrow in my life. Come in.

BARNES. Your invitation is cheerfully accepted.

(*Enters, L. C. D.*)

BILL. Shake hands with my son, John Watson.

JOHN (*as they shake*). I am pleased to know you, sir. I'm sorry I was absent from my office when you called, Mr. Barnes, but we politicians are kept pretty busy nowadays.

BARNES. Oh, I can appreciate your position, young man. I was a politician once myself, but I was too respectable for my friends and they froze me out. It's a bad game.

JOHN. Yes, that's true, but there must be some one to take the reins in hand and steer for the straight and narrow path.

BILL. Why didn't you call agin, when you found John was out?

BARNES (*embarrassed*). Well, you see, I couldn't very well. I got three days free board in a town near here.

BILL. Got arrested, eh?

BARNES. Yes. I'm ashamed to confess it, old man, but I did.

JOHN. Why don't you sober up for good, Barnes, and show the world that no blow is hard enough to knock you out, and earn again the esteem and respect of your fellow men?

BARNES. Don't you think it's gone too far for that?

JOHN. It's never too far, if a man is a man. My father has told me some of your unfortunate story, and you have my deepest sympathy.

BARNES (*slowly*). Thank you. Sympathy's fine—
(*Pauses.*)

JOHN. I know what you're thinking—that sympathy isn't all a man needs. See here—we're interested in you and we want to help you. If we find work for you, and stand back of you till you are on your feet—will you try hard to make a man of yourself? Come, what do you say? (*Holds out hand.*)

BARNES (*taking hand*). You just bet I will. Thank you. You've given me new courage.

BILL. Well, that's fine. And now, have you had supper?

BARNES. Will you kindly repeat that word? It's been so long since I heard it, I thought they'd dropped it out of the English language.

BILL. Well, I'll bet ye ain't had any.

BARNES. Correct you are! Nor dinner nor breakfast, neither.

BILL. Well, I can't see a man starve. (*Calls.*) Kate!

KATE (*off L.*). Yes, Uncle Bill.

BILL. Here's a neighbor o' mine come in late. Kin ye git him a little cold lunch?

KATE. Why, yes—I'll bring it right out.

(JOHN and BARNES have seated themselves, one on either side of the table, BARNES to extreme R.)

JOHN. Have you tried to secure work in this vicinity, Barnes?

BARNES. Yes, I asked Manders Maffitt for a job just before they sent me to jail.

BILL. Well, I'll bet ye didn't get it.

BARNES. You could bet a fortune on that with perfect

safety. He threatened to have me arrested, but I'll be even with him yet. You watch me !

(*There is a knock, L. C. D. JOHN and BARNES do not hear it. BILL goes to the door and opens it.*)

(*Enter MAFFITT and VIRGINIA.*)

JOHN. I am surprised to hear of such an action, Barnes. I have always considered Mr. Maffitt a very charitable person. He gave a thousand dollars to the church last week.

MAFFITT (*coming down*). Thank you, John. Those words are appreciated.

JOHN (*rising*). Ah, Mr. Maffitt, I did not see you. Good-evening, Virginia.

(*She crosses to him ; they talk.*)

MAFFITT. I hardly expected to hear such kind words from your son, Mr. Watson.

BILL. And why not ?

MAFFITT. Well, I—er—I didn't know but this mortgage question had prejudiced him against me.

BILL. John ain't th' boy to hold no petty spite agin any one, Mr. Maffitt.

MAFFITT. I am glad to hear that.

(*KATE enters L. with tray of food. The others are up stage and do not see her. KATE crosses to table where BARNES sits apparently lost in thought, puts tray down, sees BARNES, starts violently, and tiptoes softly back to door, L. Just as she exits, BARNES turns and sees her ; springs up excitedly.*)

BARNES. Good Heavens ! Who was that woman ?

JOHN (*turning quickly*). What woman ?

BARNES. That woman who was standing there——.

(*Points.*)

JOHN. I see no woman.

(*He exchanges significant glances with his father.*)

BILL. Poor fellow—I guess he's got 'em.

BARNES. Why, I tell you I saw her ! She was standing

right by that door a moment ago. Who is she? Who is she?

JOHN. Come, come, old man; you're simply mistaken. There was no woman there.

BARNES (*after looking at him a moment*). Well, maybe not—maybe not. (*Hand to head.*) How my head throbs! And I'm shaking in every nerve.

JOHN. Why, there's a tray of food on the table. Sit down and eat, Barnes.

(*Leads him gently to table, where Barnes sits, dazedly.*)

MAFFITT (*to BILL*). Mr. Watson, why don't you kick that fellow out?

BILL. Because th' man's hungry, Maffitt. I've never turned a hungry man from my door, an' I never will.

MAFFITT. There might be some excuse if he was a willing worker.

JOHN. There are times, Mr. Maffitt, when a man can get no work; when all the world looks down upon him and every man is ready to kick him while he's down.

MAFFITT. There is work for every one, if he will but look for it.

JOHN. If there were work for every one, we would not be bothered with the question of the unemployed.

BILL (*chuckling*). My boy, John!

VIRGINIA (*approaching Barnes*). You have my sympathy, sir, and if you will come over to my father's house in the morning, I will try and find something for you to do.

BARNES. Thank you, miss, but your father ordered me away pretty forcibly the last time I called there.

VIRGINIA. Oh, sir—I'm sure he— (*Interrupted.*)

MAFFITT. Virginia, you forget yourself. Do you think I want you talking to the scum of the earth? (*Turns to Barnes, shaking cane.*) As for you, sir, I'll settle with you later.

BARNES. Yes, and I'll settle with you.

BILL. Come, Mr. Maffitt—Barnes is eatin' at my table, an' while he is here, I'll thank you to be respectful.

MAFFITT. Such men as this are a menace to the community. Why, I'll warrant he is not even a citizen of the United States. I wouldn't have such a dangerous looking character hanging around my premises. I

would set the dogs on him. But to change the subject to a more pleasant topic, I may say, Mr. Watson, that I have every reason to believe that your son will represent us at the next session of the legislature.

BILL. Well, I'm glad you take so much interest in his nomination.

(BARNES is still eating. JOHN and VIRGINIA talking up L. C.)

MAFFITT. I have always taken a great interest in John.

JOHN (turning). I beg pardon!

MAFFITT. I was saying, John, that I believe firmly you will be our next state senator. At a meeting of the bank directors to-day it was unanimously agreed that you were the man to represent the conservative business interests of the community. In this case your assessment must be quite a considerable drain upon your resources, so if you will allow us to advance the amount, why, we shall take pleasure — (Interrupted.)

JOHN. Thank you, Mr. Maffitt. Let me ask you a question—who represents these conservative business interests you mention?

MAFFITT. Why, a majority of the respectable business men of Watsonville.

BILL. Oh, you're wrong there. Ain't he, John?

JOHN. Yes, for behind the conservative business interests are Wall Street and other big financial centers of the East.

BILL. Yes, an' any sane man kin see 'at when th' head nods in Wall Street, th' tail wiggle-waggles in Missouri.

MAFFITT. I can't see it that way.

JOHN. I didn't expect you to admit the truth of my assertion. You are more diplomatic than your friend, Crane.

MAFFITT. Crane? Why—er—do you mean my friend, Radbourne?

JOHN. Pardon me, when I knew him before he was called Crane—Norwood Crane.

BARNES (starting up quickly). Norwood Crane! Did you say "Norwood Crane"?

(Comes around end of table and faces JOHN.)

JOHN (*surprised*). Why, yes.

BARNES. And do you know him?

JOHN. I have only the slightest acquaintance with the gentleman. Mr. Maffitt, however, can give you any information you desire. Crane is known in these parts as Randolph Radbourne.

BARNES (*to MAFFITT*). Oh, so you know him, do you?

MAFFITT (*haughtily*). He is my friend and guest.

BARNES. Oh, so he's your guest? He eats at your table, does he? Do you know what he is?

MAFFITT. I know you are crazy.

BARNES. I was never saner in all my life. If you knew of what this man is capable, you would drive him from your house—aye, your town—in disgrace.

JOHN. Explain your words, Barnes.

BARNES. I will. Norwood Crane, or Randolph Radbourne, as you know him here, is the man who robbed me of my wife—the man who, as my dearest friend, crossed the threshold of an honest home, and, like the serpent he was, stung the hand that fed him!

JOHN. Your proofs, man—your proofs!

BARNES. Here in my pocket! (*Hands a letter to JOHN.*) There is one of the letters that passed between them. Look at it. It tells the whole story. For six years the one absorbing passion of my life has been to meet this man face to face, and now that he is here within my grasp, he shall suffer some of the agony that I have suffered since he robbed me of all I held dear.

MAFFITT (*coldly*). I don't believe a word of it. Mr. Radbourne is a gentleman, and you are (*contemptuously*) a tramp. Who will take your word against his?

BARNES (*bitterly*). Yes, I am down. I admit it. And that fact gives you and your scoundrelly friend a terrible advantage over me. But though you are rich and I am poor, you are not my master—nor shall you be!

MAFFITT. You poor fool—might makes right!

BARNES. Might makes right, does it? Then we'll fight it out on that line. When fathers grow desperate because of the low wages you pay them, and break into your banks to get money to sustain their families, you call out your militia and shoot them down like dogs. Why? Because might makes right! Norwood Crane stole my wife, and I'm going to kill him; and I'm going free,

for according to your own words, the law of nature—the unwritten law—stands between us! Might does make right!

(*Dramatic pose by Barnes, c. Bill and Maffitt down R., Virginia behind them. John down L.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*Same as Act I. "Star Spangled Banner" for rise.*

(KATE discovered sitting on bench, L., wrapping an American flag around the old musket. BILL enters from house at rise.)

BILL. Ah, Kate—decoratin' th' spirit o' '76, eh?

KATE. Yes, Uncle Bill. To-morrow's the Fourth, and we must celebrate, even though it be only in a small way.

BILL. You're right, gal, to-morrer is th' Fourth—th' day when my old home is to be sold—th' home where my boy wuz born an' my dear wife breathed her last. (Sighs.) Well, I reckon whoever buys it in'll let me rent it, an' then I'll be a tenant on my own property.

(Enter JOHN, quickly, L. U. E.)

JOHN. Father! Kate! My assessment has been paid.

BILL. You don't say so?

KATE. Why, John, I'm so glad.

JOHN. I don't know who paid it—it's a mystery to me.

BILL. Well, it wasn't Manders Maffitt, that's a cinch!

JOHN. No, it was not he.

BILL. Did any one else know about it?

JOHN. Yes; Virginia, but she does not understand such things.

KATE. Ah, a woman's intuition, John, is responsible for many things.

JOHN. If she has done it, I cannot allow it—I won't!

BILL. Now, don't jump at conclusions. Is that feller, Radbourne, in town yet?

JOHN. Yes, he's still here, waiting. I suppose he wants to see who buys in the farm to-morrow. Since the extension of the mortgage was refused, I am sure it was he who forced Maffitt to foreclose.

BILL. I thought so, John—that skunk means mischief, take my word for it. Keep your eye on him, boy—keep your eye on him.

(*Exits into house.*)

JOHN. Kate, I hope you are feeling better to-day.

KATE. Well, I'm not feeling very well, John.

JOHN. No—you have not been yourself since the night we sent Dustin Barnes to the sanitarium.

KATE (*starting up*). Then you guessed my secret?

JOHN. Yes, I realized almost from the first that you were the unfortunate woman who figured in the story of Barnes' life. (*She starts to go.*) Wait a moment, Kate. Don't think I mean to blame you. I did not mean it that way. We all make mistakes, and you may be sure that your secret is safe with me.

KATE. Oh, yes, I know, I know—but I realize that you can never look upon me in the future as you have in the past.

JOHN. Again you mistake me. I think even more of you, Kate, for your noble effort to live down the folly of your youth. Come, don't feel so badly about it. (*Suddenly feels in his pocket.*) By the way, I have a letter for you.

KATE. Is—is it from—from my husband?

JOHN (*giving it*). No, I think it's from the school trustees. No doubt they are going to give you a vacation.

KATE (*tearing it open and reading silently*). Yes, they are going to give me a vacation—a long one.

JOHN. Why, Kate, you don't—you can't mean they've—

(*Interrupted.*)

KATE. That's what I mean, John. They've asked me to resign.

JOHN. This is more of Norwood Crane's work.

KATE. Well, I suppose I shouldn't complain—God's ways are just.

JOHN. I feel for you deeply, Kate.

KATE. I don't deserve your sympathy. I don't deserve anybody's sympathy. With this against my name, what is to become of me?

JOHN. Why, you'll make your home here with us.

KATE. No, no.

JOHN. I say, yes. And you've been teaching school long enough to have saved quite a sum. You surely

will not want for anything. Money is a great thing, Kate—even a little money.

KATE. You are right, money is a great thing—for those who have it. (*Aside.*) I cannot bring myself to tell him that I used my money to pay his assessment.

(*Crosses, half-sobbing, and exits into house.*)

JOHN. Poor Kate! Poor Kate!

(*Enter RIP, L. U. E.*)

RIP. Say, Mister John.

JOHN. Well, what is it?

RIP. I been down by th' village, an' folks down that-a-way is callin' you a monster.

JOHN. Calling me a monster?

RIP. Yep; an' say, is that what poltyics does fer a feller?

JOHN. Yes, Rip. That's what politics does for a fellow.

RIP (*grinning*). Then I don't want no poltyics in mine.

(*Goes up R., looks off. BILL and AUNT T. enter from house.*)

BILL (*has a newspaper, which he is flourishing*). John, boy, have ye read th' papers to-day?

JOHN. No—I haven't time.

BILL. Then ye don't know what they've been sayin' about ye?

JOHN. Rip says they are calling me a monster.

BILL. Wuss'n that—wuss'n that.

AUNT T. I'd sue 'em fer libel, that's what I'd do.

JOHN. They can say nothing truthful against my character.

BILL. But they've gone an' done it, just th' same. See there. (*Holds paper before JOHN, pointing.*) "A Moral Monster! Candidate for Legislature Shelters Suspicious Woman."

JOHN. My God—has Kate seen this?

(*Clutches his father's arm.*)

BILL. No, an' what's more, she ain't goin' to.

AUNT T. No, we've kept the paper out of her sight.

JOHN (*pacing up and down in a rage*). The cowards—the hounds—to insinuate such a thing!

BILL. I didn't s'pose Tom Spuds 'd put a thing like that in his paper.

JOHN. Of course he'll put it in when he's paid for it. He has no conscience.

BILL. Ye think Radbourne did this?

JOHN. I know it, and when I get my hands on him again — (Interrupted.)

BILL (patting him on the shoulder). Come, boy, he ain't wuth it. He'll get his just deserts.

JOHN. Yes, he'll get his deserts, all right. There's one man who has a perfect right to kill the cad, but he is not here.

BILL. You mean Dustin Barnes?

JOHN. Yes, he is entitled to Radbourne's life by every law of nature.

BILL. But we can't go by th' law of nature, John—there's another law what holds us tighter.

JOHN. But there's such a thing as unwritten law, and Randolph Radbourne may find he's played one card too many. (Sinks on bench.) Poor Kate—poor Kate!

BILL (trying hard not to seem affected, half blubbers). By gosh, I'm so gol durn mad, that if I don't git some cider quick I'll bust. (Starts for door.)

RIP (coming down). Say, Mr. Watson.

BILL. Shet up.

RIP. But say, do you know I — (Interrupted.)

BILL. Shet up!

RIP (subsiding). Guess I must 'a' made a mistake.

(Exits whistling, R. U. E.)

BILL. Durn him! He's got a habit of gittin' me all wrought up. I'll fire him some day.

AUNT T. If you don't I will. He'd oughter have his neck wrung.

BILL. Well, come on an' git me some cider. I feel like a volcany, an' if I don't git somethin' to cool me off, there'll be an eruption that'll put Vesuvius clean in th' shade.

(She exits, he following. JOHN rises.)

JOHN. Poor Kate—poor Kate!

(Exits after them.)

(MAFFITT and VIRGINIA enter from R., through gate, talking.)

MAFFITT. You may as well make up your mind to obey me.

VIRGINIA. In anything but this. But when you ask me to tell you I do not love John Watson, I can't do it, for it would be a falsehood.

MAFFITT. And you are going to marry him?

VIRGINIA. Yes.

MAFFITT. Did you not promise me once that you would never marry against my wishes?

VIRGINIA. Yes, but that was a long time ago; before I was of age. And I was not in love then.

MAFFITT. I'll make it worth your while to give up John Watson.

VIRGINIA. Why, papa, what do you mean?

MAFFITT. To-morrow this farm will be knocked down at auction to the highest bidder. If you promise to leave John Watson alone in the future, I will give you enough money with which to buy in the farm, and then you can present it to old Bill, or keep it as you please.

VIRGINIA. And if I refuse?

MAFFITT. It will then fall into the hands of Randolph Radbourne, who will turn these people out of house and home.

VIRGINIA. Yes, the coward!

MAFFITT. He is simply after a few of the good things of life—that's all. Come—what do you say?

VIRGINIA. Give me time to think. (*Sits on bench.*)

MAFFITT. You will never regret it.

VIRGINIA. You don't realize what you ask of me. I love John too well to give him up.

MAFFITT. This is only a sudden passion. Once you are away from him, you will soon forgive me and forget him.

VIRGINIA. I could never do that.

MAFFITT. Will you try?

VIRGINIA. Oh, I don't know—I don't know. Why won't you let me marry whom I please?

MAFFITT. Because I don't want a daughter of mine linked to a man whom the papers are calling every name under the sun.

VIRGINIA. The papers are full of political lies. I don't believe a word of what they say.

MAFFITT. Still, it is bound to create scandal. I want your answer.

VIRGINIA. I—I— (*Interrupted.*)

MAFFITT. Are you prepared to see John Watson and his father driven from the old farm?

VIRGINIA. No—no! Not that.

MAFFITT. Then will you accept a check from me, fill it in to any amount necessary to purchase the farm at the sheriff's sale to-morrow, and give this young politician up?

VIRGINIA. I—I—oh, why do you make it so hard for me? I—yes—yes—I will do as you ask. Give me the check.

MAFFITT (*triumphantly*). Now you are coming to your senses. A winter in Washington and a summer at Newport will drive John Watson from your mind.

(*Takes check-book from his pocket.*)

VIRGINIA. Oh, papa, I—I—

(*Interrupted by BARNES, who enters L., through gate, and comes down. He is in the best of health and neatly dressed.*)

BARNES. I beg your pardon! (VIRGINIA and MAFFITT start.) I did not mean to startle you, Mr. Maffitt, but can you tell me— (*Interrupted.*)

MAFFITT. What do you mean by this interruption? I do not know you, sir.

BARNES. Well, I don't wonder at that; for the last time you saw me I wasn't quite as well groomed as I am now.

MAFFITT. Still you have the advantage, sir.

BARNES. I am Dustin Barnes—the man Bill Watson sent away to the sanitarium. I had had a hard run of luck up to that time, but now, I am happy to say, I feel well both in mind and body.

MAFFITT (*adjusting his glasses that he may better look at him*). Well, well, so you are Barnes, eh? The man whom I wanted to kick out of Watson's house one night, eh? Do you remember that? But we'll let bygones be bygones. See here, you once asked me for work. Do you still want it?

BARNES. Yes.

MAFFITT. Well, here, then— (*Writes on card which he takes from his pocket.*) Here is a note to Mr. Cud-daway, the superintendent of the new railroad now

under construction. He is looking for good men. I wish you the best of luck.

BARNES. Thank you. (*Takes card, and starts up stage.*)

MAFFITT. Hold a moment, Barnes, I may want another word with you.

BARNES. I am at your service. (*Stops up L.*)

MAFFITT (*down R., to VIRGINIA*). Let this man buy in the farm for you. Then we shall not be known in the transaction. Do you agree?

VIRGINIA. Yes.

MAFFITT. Ah—er—Barnes. My daughter wishes to speak with you. I see young Rip Stokey in the road yonder. I want him to do something for me. I will return shortly, Virginia.

(*Exits R., through gate.*)

BARNES (*coming down*). You have something to say to me, Miss Maffitt?

VIRGINIA. Why, yes, I—I—am so glad to see this change in you.

BARNES. Thank you. (*Smiles.*) It's about the only change I've had in some time. But, seriously, Miss Virginia, I owe it all to John Watson and his dear old father. Some day I hope to repay them.

VIRGINIA. You can do so at once if you wish.

BARNES. I don't believe I understand.

VIRGINIA. The old farm has been foreclosed and will be sold by the sheriff to-morrow. You can buy it in and give it back to Mr. Watson.

BARNES. I didn't think you'd make game of me, Miss Maffitt.

VIRGINIA. But I am in deadly earnest.

BARNES. And you think I am able to buy in this farm? Why, I couldn't buy one shingle off the roof of that house.

VIRGINIA. But I will make it possible for you to do this. Don't ask me why, but take this check. It was drawn by my father and is signed by him. You can bid in the farm to-morrow no matter what it costs, and fill in the check for the necessary amount. Will you do this for me?

BARNES. I hardly understand, but I will do as you ask.

(*Takes check.*) "Payable to bearer." You are sure this is genuine?

VIRGINIA. Why, I saw my father sign it.

BARNES. Very well.

VIRGINIA. Then you will do as I wish?

BARNES. Yes.

VIRGINIA. Oh, thank you—thank you!

(*Extends hand, which he touches lightly.*)

BARNES (*going up L.*). Six months ago I was sure there were no good women in the world, but now I know there is one good woman after all.

(*Exits, L. U. E.*)

(*Enter JOHN, from house.*)

JOHN. Hello—been here long? (*Takes her hand.*)

VIRGINIA. No—I came over with papa—he is down in the field talking to Rip.

(*Turns away and withdraws hand.*)

JOHN. Why, Virginia! What is the matter? You are trembling. Are you ill?

VIRGINIA. Ill at heart—yes.

JOHN. Why are you ill at heart?

VIRGINIA. Why—some—that is, certain things have—have come up recently, John, and I'm afraid all is over between us.

JOHN. I don't understand.

VIRGINIA. And I can't explain.

JOHN. Do you not love me as you used to?

VIRGINIA. Why, yes, John, I—that is— (*Interrupted.*)

JOHN. No—you do not. And that is not all—you are keeping something from me. I demand your reason for this strange conduct.

VIRGINIA. You have no right to demand it.

JOHN. I have every right. First, the right of any man to share the secrets of his fiancée; second, the right to help and assist her when she is in trouble, and you are in trouble, Virginia—I feel sure of it.

VIRGINIA. No—no—I—that is, it is nothing. Father won't give his consent to the match, and I am sure I could never be happy without his blessing.

JOHN. Virginia! You say this to me?

VIRGINIA (*sadly*). Yes.

JOHN. But this has come over you so suddenly.

VIRGINIA. Yes, but—it's true and that's all there is to it.

(Enter MAFFITT, R. 3 E., *listens*.)

JOHN. You are going to cast me off without even an explanation?

VIRGINIA. Yes—yes—I must—I must.

JOHN (*seizing her arm*). Virginia, this is not like you. Something has happened to turn you against me.

VIRGINIA. I have no explanation to offer, so let that end it.

(*Shakes him off*.)

JOHN. But, Virginia — (Interrupted.)

MAFFITT. Pardon me for interrupting this little drama, but I feel called upon to remark that my daughter is perfectly right. She has no explanation to make to you, sir.

JOHN. But, Mr. Maffitt, this is unjust to me.

MAFFITT. I am the best judge of that. Do you think I want Virginia to marry a man who, to say the least, is not a gentleman?

JOHN (*after an effort to repress his rage*). If it were not for your gray hairs, I would make you repent that speech!

MAFFITT. I should not be surprised to receive an attack at your hands. It would only bear out what every one is saying about you.

JOHN. I know what they are saying, but they are liars and cowards who cast slurs at a man when his back is turned. That's the sort of people I have to deal with in this election, but just as sure as I am standing here I'll beat them until they whine like the curs they are. (*Pause*.) Now you can go—there's the path.

(*Points*.)

MAFFITT. I'll go, but I'm not through with you yet.

JOHN. The fight is on to a finish, and the hotter you make it the better. (*Pause*.) I am still waiting for you to go.

MAFFITT. This may not be your place to-morrow.

JOHN. Yes, but it's ours to-day, and as long as we are in possession I'll thank you to keep off.

VIRGINIA (*going toward him, hands outstretched*). Oh, John, John!

(JOHN *removes his hat, bows very low, and turns away. She hesitates, presses hand to her head, then goes up to her father and they exount together, r. JOHN stands down L., until BILL enters from house, and seeing him, goes over to him.*)

BILL. Boy, what's th' matter?

JOHN. Mr. Maffitt and Virginia have just left, father.

BILL (*eagerly*). Yes, yes.

JOHN. Maffitt says I shall never marry Virginia, and worst of all, she sustains him in it.

BILL. Not Virginny?

JOHN. Yes.

BILL. Not our Virginny gal that we all love so well?

JOHN. Yes, yes.

BILL. Why—why I never thought Virginny'd do a thing like that. But don't worry over it, boy—a gal that'd throw a feller over like that she ain't much—she ain't much.

(KATE *enters from house, pausing on steps.*)

KATE. What's the matter, Uncle Bill?

BILL. Virginny's thrown John over, Kate.

KATE. She has?

BILL. Yes, but I say fer him not to worry, she ain't worth it.

KATE. You are right. The woman who trifles with a true man's heart is little better than a criminal. Cheer up, John—remember he stands strongest who stands alone.

JOHN. You are right. This shall not ruin my life—my career. These people have started an unjust fight on me— (*Crosses to steps.*) A fight against the people and their rights. But I'll champion the working man's cause as long as there's a breath left in my body. I'll give up the old love and on with the new—hereafter my battle shall be for suffering humanity.

(*Exits into house. Daylight begins gradually to change to sunset.*)

BILL. You heard him, Kate? My boy, John!

KATE. And his resolve is a sensible one. If Virginia Maffitt has been influenced by her father in this matter, hers is not the true love a man like John deserves.

BILL. Now, that's good sound sense, Kate—good sound sense.

(*Exits into house, muttering to himself.*)

KATE. I would I had been as sensible years ago. If Dustin only knew how repentant I am perhaps he would forgive me. But he will never know—never.

(*Down R. at bench. Barnes enters, L. U. E., comes down C., sees her in the red glow of the sunset, but her back is toward him and he does not recognize her.*)

BARNES. Oh, I beg pardon—I—I —— (*She turns.*)
Kate!

KATE. Dustin!

BARNES. So after all these years I meet you face to face?

KATE. I—I hardly know what to say to you—I—I ——

(*Interrupted.*)

BARNES. Then say nothing. I have already heard enough lies from your lips.

KATE. But I must, I will speak!

BARNES. All your fine words will never make up for what I have suffered.

KATE. If you have suffered, so have I.

BARNES. But what has your suffering been to mine—you, who have only a guilty conscience and the thoughts of the man you wronged to trouble you. Look at me! I am but a wreck of my former self. Does it make you happy to know that it was you who started me on the road to ruin? (*Laughs bitterly.*)

KATE. Oh, Dustin, I know. The thought of it has been the bitterest part of my punishment. But—you—you are no longer that way. I can see it. You are once more the old Dustin I used to know.

BARNES. Yes. The Watsons helped me. I went West and started again. I've done well.

KATE. You—you will stay here, now?

BARNES. No. I go West again to-morrow.

KATE. Oh, Dustin—take me with you—please.

BARNES (*laughing scornfully*). What—take you back? Why, I swore to kill you. I don't know why I don't. Only—when I look into your eyes—

KATE. Oh, pity me, Dustin, pity me!

BARNES. Pity you! Had you any pity in your heart when you left me?

KATE (*covering face with hands*). Oh, Dustin, Dustin!

BARNES. You were false to me once. How can I believe in you again?

KATE. Listen, Dustin. It was only because I was persuaded you were false to me that I left you. I was mad with jealousy and wounded pride.

BARNES. That villain told you I was false to you?

KATE. Yes. I have tried partly to atone by a life of hard work and sacrifice. I am changed, Dustin, believe me.

BARNES. If I could believe you!

KATE (*suddenly*). Let my friends here speak for me—the Watsons. They know my repentance. May I bring them here? (*Starts toward house.*)

BARNES. No. Stay here. I will speak to them myself.

(*Exits to house.*)

KATE (*throwing herself on bench*). Oh, he must believe me, he must!

(*Enter RAD., from L., through gate.*)

RAD. Ah, a pretty picture.

KATE (*springing to her feet and facing him*). Go! You must go at once.

RAD. Indeed! Why?

KATE. You have done enough mischief. He must not find you here with me. Go.

RAD. He? Who?

KATE. My husband.

RAD. What! That good-for-nothing? Has he turned up? Why, you wouldn't look at him—a disreputable vagabond. (*Enter BARNES and JOHN from house.*) Come, Kate, let's be friends. What do we care for that tramp?

(*Puts arm around her. BARNES starts forward, but JOHN checks him.*)

KATE (*grasping RAD.'s arm and throwing it from her*). Care for him ! I have always cared for him. You deceived me for a few weeks into thinking I did not.

But I know now that I always loved him, and I always will.

BARNES (*coming down, and holding out arms to her*). Kate !

KATE. Oh, Dustin !

(*She hides head on his shoulder, sobbing.*)

RAD. The reconciliation ! (*Laughs.*) A very touching picture—very.

BARNES (*springing toward him—while JOHN takes KATE'S hand*). You scoundrel—you stole her from me once, but you cannot part us again.

RAD. Oh, you're welcome to her—such as she is !

BARNES (*furious*). You unspeakable coward. I swore I'd kill you, and by heaven I will.

(*Draws revolver and points it. RAD. cowers. KATE springs toward BARNES, grasps his wrist, and turns pistol up into air.*)

KATE. Dustin, don't ! Don't shoot him ! (*Tableau.*)

BARNES. What ! You love him, then, after all ? (*To RAD., who makes a step.*) Don't move !

KATE. No. I hate him. But—it would be murder, Dustin—and it would be my fault. Oh, Dustin, I have enough to bear, without that ! Let him go !

BARNES. What ! Let him go—that snake—

KATE. Yes. For my sake, Dustin.

JOHN. She's right, Barnes. Killing is too good for him.

BARNES (*lowering pistol*). I guess you're right. (*To RAD.*) Go. You owe your life to her.

(*Points to KATE.*)

(*Exit RAD. through gate and off L.*)

(*Enter BILL and AUNT T., from house.*)

BILL (*coming down*). Why, it's Barnes again !

BARNES. Yes, it's Barnes again. That's just it. I'm a man once more and master of myself,—thanks to you, and to my wife. (*Draws KATE to him.*)

BILL }
AUNT T. } Your wife!

BARNES. Yes. We have buried the past. The villain who injured our happiness has been plotting also against yours. But don't worry, good friends. (*Draws KATE to him with right hand, and gives left hand to BILL.*) The good old Missouri sun is still shining, and it's all coming out right—coming out right.

(*Tableau. KATE, L., BARNES, L. C., BILL, C., AUNT T., R. C., and JOHN, R.*)

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE.—*Handsome interior, with large arch or wide door up C., or may be on the oblique, up L. Doors L. and R. Table and chairs down R. Sofa down L. Interior backing. Dance music heard off L.*

(MAFFITT and RAD. discovered, entering through arch at rise. They go to table and sit, MAFFITT, R., RAD., L.)

RAD. You can evade the issue no longer, Maffitt—I must have an answer.

MAFFITT. Do not press me for an answer to-night.

RAD. I am not pressing you unduly. Are you not under obligations to me?

MAFFITT. Yes, yes.

RAD. When the finances of your bank were at a low ebb, I tided you over, did I not?

MAFFITT. Yes.

RAD. Thereby saving you from ruin?

MAFFITT. Yes, but at what a cost. Ever since that day I have been completely in your power.

RAD. Oh, don't put it that way. Say, rather, that I have exerted a beneficial influence over you.

MAFFITT. But you are not satisfied with a mortgage on all my available property, but want a mortgage on Virginia's hand, as well.

RAD. Well, that need not worry you. Virginia loves me.

MAFFITT. I fear she does not.

RAD. Has she said so?

MAFFITT. Yes.

RAD. Well, she'll learn to love me, anyway.

MAFFITT. I do not think so.

RAD. She must!

MAFFITT (*in despair*). Do as you will. I am in your power.

RAD. (*laughing*). Yes, you're in my power. One snap of my fingers can spell ruin in large letters for you. So remember, I must have my answer within half an hour.

(*Rises.*)

MAFFITT. You shall have it if matters can be brought to a crisis within that time. (*Also rises.*)

RAD. If matters are not brought to a crisis within that time, I shall take immediate steps to foreclose the mortgage.

MAFFITT. Yes, I suppose so. I did not hope for mercy from such as you.

VIRGINIA (*off L.*). Very well, Miss Watson, I shall see papa at once. He will be glad to have news from home.

MAFFITT. Virginia is coming. Leave us.

RAD. Very well, but remember—within half an hour.

(*Exits through arch.*)

(Enter VIRGINIA, L. *She is laughing, but stops when she sees her father's sober face.*)

VIRGINIA. Why, papa, what's the matter? (*Goes to him.*)

MAFFITT. Virginia, I have a painful subject to discuss with you,—your engagement to Randolph Radbourne.

VIRGINIA (*sitting on settee*). Why speak of that now?

MAFFITT. Because it is necessary, imperative, that a decision be reached at once.

VIRGINIA. But what can I do?

MAFFITT. I know how you feel about the matter. But he is pressing me closely, and unless I comply with his wishes within a half hour, he will foreclose the mortgage he holds on my property, and we will be ruined, for I have not a cent with which to face the world.

VIRGINIA. And he is forcing you to this?

MAFFITT. Yes.

VIRGINIA. Well, he expects too much. Why should I be made to pay the price of my father's extravagance?

MAFFITT. I don't know, Virginia—I don't know.

VIRGINIA. How can a man like this Radbourne expect to marry a woman with a spotless reputation?

MAFFITT. Oh, I know Radbourne was indiscreet while young, but every young man must sow his wild oats.

VIRGINIA. Is that any reason why we women should reap the whirlwind?

MAFFITT. I have nothing more to say, Virginia. Do as you wish. (*Totters toward table.*)

VIRGINIA (*springing toward him, supports him, hands on*

his shoulders). Papa, tell me truthfully, do you want me to marry this man?

MAFFITT. It means ruin for me if you do not!

VIRGINIA. And you would rather see me in his arms, knowing who and what he is and how I loathe him, than have ruin stare you in the face?

MAFFITT (*after some hesitation*). No—Virginia, no! (*Takes her hand.*) Do as you think best, and I will abide by your decision. (*They go up toward R.*)

VIRGINIA. Oh, thank you, thank you.

MAFFITT. But he must have an answer, one way or another, within half an hour.

(*They exeunt, talking, R.*)

(Enter BILL, through arch. *He is looking back, waving a "bandanna" handkerchief to some one in the ball-room. Turns.*)

BILL. Listen to that moosic, would ye? Why, th' fiddlin' they have at these Jefferson City balls beats Tom Smith all to smash. (*Sees footstool.*) Hello, durned if they ain't got pincushions on th' floor. This is a strange town, anyway. I run about three blocks this mornin' to tell a feller his wagon was leakin', but he said it was all right—it was a sprinklin' cart. I went so far I had to take a street-car to git back. I took hold o' one o' them harnesses what's hangin' from th' top o' th' car, an' th' way I swung around on them ladies' laps was a caution. I reckon I stepped on one lady's foot, fer she said, "Old man, look where you put your feet." I says, "Young lady, I brung them feet in with me, an' I've got to put 'em somewhere." Th' only thing that bothers me about them blame street-cars is that clock they've got hangin' in one end o' th' place with a clothes-line tied to it. Every time the conductor got a nickel he'd pull th' clothes-line, an' the clock says "Ding!" One minute the thing says "In," and th' next minute it says "Out." Th' only conclusion I could reach was that it told how much th' conductor was in, an' how much th' company was out.

(Enter RIP and AUNT T., through arch.)

RIP (*pointing at BILL*). Huh—there he is, Aunt Tillie.

BILL. Hullo—where you folks been?

AUNT T. Where have you been, Bill Watson? We've been huntin' all over this blessed place fer you. Come pretty nigh gittin' lost. Lawsee—if anybody back to Watsonville had told me th' governor of Missouri had sich a fine place, I'd have called them a prevaricator right to their face.

BILL. Well, you better get used to it. Here's our John in the legislature, and he may be governor and livin' right here before ye know it.

AUNT T. Well, it beats me. (*Looks about.*)

BILL. You've got some few things to learn yet, Tillie.

RIP. You bet she has. (*She strikes at him; he dodges.*) Say, Mister Watson.

BILL. Well, what is it?

RIP. You know that old lop-eared mule o' oun?

BILL. Yep—what about him?

RIP. Nothin', only he's still there!

BILL. Now you git out o' here 'fore I git mad an' tan your jacket. (*Starts for him. RIP runs out L.*)

AUNT T. Fer goodness' sake behave yourself while you're here, Bill, an' don't let your nasty temper git the best of you.

BILL. You mind your own business, an' I'll 'tend to mine.

AUNT T. Well, I'll have to keep an eye on that boy. (*Over to L. I E.*) No tellin' what he'll do if he's allowed to roam around the ballroom. He might make John sorry he got us this invite to th' ball.

(*Exits.*)

(RAD. *appears in arch, looking off.*)

BILL. Well, durn me, if there ain't that feller, Radbourne, all dressed up in swaller-spikes.

RAD (*turning*). Ah, Mr. Watson, how are you?

(*Offers hand. BILL looks at it a minute, shakes his head.*)

BILL. No, I reckon not.

RAD. You won't shake hands with me?

BILL. No. Before I left Watsonville, they told me to look out fer bunco steerers. I'd rather shake hands any day with a common sneak-thief than one who steals under th' name o' financierin'.

(Enter JOHN, through arch, listens.)

RAD. If you were a younger man, Mr. Watson, I'd make you regret that speech.

BILL. Oh, ye would? (Starts to roll up his sleeves.)

RAD. Yes, but your age entitles you to some consideration.

JOHN (coming down between them). I am not entitled to that consideration. In regard to age, you and I are equal.

BILL (proudly). My son, John!

RAD. Men of my set do not quarrel with their inferiors.

(Turns away.)

JOHN. There are no inferiors to the set to which you belong.

RAD. (laughing). I have become used to vulgar boasts since coming to America, yet it will be a great consolation when I return to England next month, with Miss Maffitt as my bride, to know that I shall never again be forced to set foot on American soil, or speak to people who are not my equals.

JOHN. With such blood in your veins you could never become an American.

RAD. I don't want to. The sun never sets on the British Empire, and it's good enough for me.

BILL. Do you know why the sun never sets on the British Empire? It's because th' Lord's afraid to trust such Englishmen as you in th' dark!

JOHN. And now we can dispense with your presence.

RAD. No—I shall dispense with yours.

(Exits, angrily, through arch.)

BILL. Boy, th' society that feller belongs to is so durned rotten it's beginnin' to decay. It's bad enuff to be robbed of Virginny, without havin' it slung in your face by a rat like that.

JOHN. Father, I've heard to-day from Dustin Barnes. He and Kate are in town, and I've invited them here. If he and Radbourne meet there may be trouble.

BILL. That's so. Well, we'll hope they won't meet. My, but I'll be glad to see them. How are they?

JOHN. Very well. And, father, I hear Barnes has struck

it rich. They found a copper mine on that Montana land of his.

BILL. Ye don't say! Well, they deserves it, him and Kate.

(Enter MAFFITT, R. I. E.)

MAFFITT. Ah, Mr. Watson. I am glad to see you in Jefferson City. How do you do, John?

BILL. Well, if it ain't Manders Maffitt!

(He shakes his hand. JOHN bows, and turns away.)

MAFFITT. John, I understand your bill to make an eight-hour day for the working man has passed the legislature?

JOHN. Yes, I got it through last night at the extra session.

MAFFITT. I am glad to hear of your good fortune.

JOHN (significantly). Are you, Mr. Maffitt?

MAFFITT. Why, surely you know that I have always had your welfare at heart.

JOHN. You have a short memory, sir.

BILL. I reckon John's about right, Maffitt. When you wrong one Watson, you wrong th' whole family.

MAFFITT. I do not understand you.

BILL. Yes, ye do. John ain't fergot th' way you talked about him before election.

MAFFITT. But that was merely friendly political rivalry.

JOHN. Political rivalry! In my father's house lived a wronged woman, whose past life you made public in order to defeat me.

MAFFITT. Why, I—I— (Interrupted.)

BILL. It's true, Maffitt, every word of it. Kate Patton was just as pure an' good a woman as ever lived, but she'd fallen into the hands of a scoundrel. Which was th' worst, my harborin' th' woman under my roof, or you keepin' th' scoundrel under yours?

MAFFITT. Well, you will admit she ran away from her husband. People will talk, you know, in such cases. And then it was a little peculiar, her paying your nomination assessment that way—

JOHN. Paying my assessment! What do you mean?

MAFFITT. What! Don't pretend ignorance. Brown, the county chairman, told me about how she came to him.

BILL. (to JOHN). The dear girl. Wasn't that jest like Kate? But she ought not to have done it.

JOHN. No. She must have used all her savings. Well, I'll make it up to her.

MAFFITT. I'm really sorry if I've done her or you an injustice. All I want is to pass my old age somewhere in peace and quiet. I have no ill feeling now and I hope all John's hopes may be realized.

JOHN. There is one hope which it is impossible for me to realize.

MAFFITT. You mean—Virginia?

JOHN. I do, sir. Perhaps you know why she threw me over—I do not. But I cannot help thinking you forced her to it.

MAFFITT. Why, John, I—I—

JOHN. Do you mean to tell me you did not?

MAFFITT. I was opposed to the match—yes.

JOHN. You mean you are still opposed to it—although you know neither of us can ever be happy without the other.

MAFFITT. You—you think she still loves you.

JOHN. I am sure of it.

MAFFITT (*aside*). I know she does. (*To JOHN*.) Well, if she still wishes to marry you, I will not stand in the way.

JOHN (*joyfully*). I may tell her that?

MAFFITT. Yes. (*Aside*.) I have made them happy—But at what a sacrifice.

JOHN. I will go to her at once. (*Starts toward arch, but stops*.) Why, here are Barnes and Kate.

MAFFITT. Then I'll go.

BILL. Don't ye do it. They'll be glad to see an old friend.

(Enter BARNES and KATE through arch.)

BARNES. How are you, Mr. Watson—John! My, but I'm glad to get hold of your hands again.

(BARNES, BILL and JOHN shake hands.)

KATE. Please—can't I come in too?

BILL. Well, I guess.

JOHN. No, Kate, you can't come in—because you never went out. We've always included you in the family; and now since I owe so much to you—oh, Kate, I've

just heard what you did for me. It was fine, but you ought not —

KATE (*laughing*). There—that's enough. I only paid part of my debt to you and Uncle Bill.

BILL. Uncle Bill, eh? You ain't forgot that, have ye? My, but that sounds fine.

KATE (*to JOHN*). Why aren't you with Virginia? I saw her moping by herself out there.

JOHN. Why, Kate, you know she and I—before you went away you know—well, you know what she did.

(*Desperately.*)

BARNES. Yes, I know she threw you over only because she was told it was the only way to save the old place for you all. Do you mean to say you don't know that was the reason?

JOHN. Why—no. I don't understand. How —

KATE (*laughing*). Go and ask her then. It's time you and she were getting better acquainted.

JOHN. I will ask her—right now.

BARNES. Well, that'll come out all right then.

BILL. Here's her father. Here's Mr. Maffitt. You remember him.

BARNES (*shaking MAFFITT's hand, as KATE bows*). We have just been hearing some news about Mr. Maffitt.

MAFFITT. About me? What can you have heard?

BARNES. That Randolph Radbourne, as you know him, has a mortgage on every cent of your property and has threatened to foreclose. Is this true?

MAFFITT (*sadly*). Yes, I am sorry to say it is.

BARNES. What, if I may ask, is the nature of this obligation?

MAFFITT. During the money panic which followed the election last year, my bank became sorely in need of funds. He offered to tide me over. I mortgaged all my property, as I had no alternative but to accept or go to the wall.

BARNES. And he has pressed this mortgage?

MAFFITT. I have not known a moment's peace since I became under obligations to him. Good Heavens! the agony of mind! Will it never, never end?

BARNES. Don't give up yet. Where is this man?

MAFFITT. He is in this house.

BARNES. In this house? You don't mean that?

BILL. He's right, Barnes—I saw him myself.

(*JOHN and VIRGINIA enter, R., talking; they walk over and sit on sofa.*)

BARNES. I did not expect to meet with such good fortune.

(*Enter quickly through arch, RAD., goes down to MAFFITT, paying no attention to the others, who stare at him.*)

RAD. I have come for my answer.

BARNES. Then receive it from me!

RAD. (*turning quickly*). Barnes!

BARNES. Yes, come back to give you a taste of your own medicine.

RAD. Well?

BARNES. According to our Western code, I ought to have killed you long ago, but I have a better fate for you. Now, what is the amount of Mr. Maffitt's debt?

RAD. I refuse to talk to you.

MAFFITT. The debt is \$22,000, including the interest.

BARNES. I will write a check for the amount. (*To RAD.*) And you write a receipt in full.

VIRGINIA (*springing up*). But, Mr. Barnes, we cannot allow this.

(*RAD., a sneering smile on his face, writes the receipt at table.*)

BARNES. Hold on, Miss Maffitt, I'm doing this for you and John.

(*Pulls check-book and fountain pen from pocket and writes check, which he hands to RAD. after first taking the receipt.*)

MAFFITT. How can I thank you?

RAD. Now, are you through with me?

BARNES. Not quite. Since you are so fond of mortgages, perhaps you would like to buy one of your own for \$100,000 from the Bernard Banking Company of Wall Street, New York.

RAD. What do you know of the Bernard Banking Company?

BARNES. Enough to realize that you can never pay that debt. It falls due next Friday.

RAD. They will not press me. The members of the Bernard Banking Company are honorable men in every sense of the word.

BARNES. Perhaps that is true, only the firm which formerly went under that name is now known as Dustin Barnes & Company.

RAD. This is some trick to deceive me.

BARNES. You will find me in my New York office Friday afternoon at four o'clock. At that hour you will pay me the sum of \$100,000, or I shall foreclose this mortgage and take everything you possess.

RAD. Would you ruin me?

BARNES. Who are you to talk of ruin? Did you stop to think of ruin when you deceived a trusting girl years ago? Did you think of ruin when you lent Mr. Maffitt money to save his bank and demanded in return not only compound interest, but the hand of his daughter as well? Now go, Norwood Crane, before I do you harm. Our account is beginning to balance at last. Go, I say! (*Points.*)

RAD. (*going up to arch, turns*). I'll remember this!

BILL. Let's hope you do—it's a durn good lesson fer ye.

(RIP and AUNT T. enter through arch, just as BARNES and KATE and JOHN and VIRGINIA embrace.)

RIP. Say, Mr. Watson!

BILL (*looking around slyly at the two couples*). Shet up, consarn ye—can't ye see they're busy!

BARNES (*coming down with KATE*). Mr. Watson, when are you going back to the farm?

BILL. Why, ter-morrer, I guess. Things'll be needin' me there.

BARNES. Well, will it be convenient for you to have visitors?

BILL. What, you an' Kate? Well, I just guess.

BARNES (*looking around*). Let's all go back there. What do you say, friends? (*All assent, loudly.*) Let's go back to the old farm long enough to get the bad taste of the world out of our mouths. I guess you'll have to take us all in, Uncle Bill. And what a time we'll have.

For real happiness I guess there's no better place in the world than right down there along the Missouri.

PICTURE:

KATE BARNES

RIP

BILL

AUNT T.
VIRGINIA

MAFFITT

JOHN

CURTAIN



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